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The Tattoo Magazine

the **MAD**
DASH to
CRASH

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Racers Invade
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Face the Music in Britain**

Europe's Best Kept Secret

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Tattoo Artists in Paradise

Downtown L.A.

**Tattoo's Oldest Battleground
The Interrogation of
Tennessee Dave**

JULY 1998



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Plus: YOUNG WOMAN BEFRIENDED BY GIANT MOTH!



Photo by: Robin Perrine

THE JAMES BROTHERS

Tennessee Dave James (page 50) and Greg James (page 12)

SKIN & INK - July 1998 - ISSUE 33

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Brand-new to the magazine! Look for *HipShots* with Diane Mansfield on page 11, *Talk Back* with Joe Vegas on page 16, and Litz's *Sketchbook* on page 20!

Editor's Comment

BY BOB BAXTER



Hey, kid. You with the tattoo. So, there aren't any jobs available in your community except tattoo artist? You're telling me that the only possible match for your skills is to become a professional ink pusher? You think you have some level of drawing talent and you refuse to be a sign painter, a person who paints the eyes on porcelain Diana dolls or an illustrator for a silkscreen T-shirt shop? Oh, that would be too demeaning, would it? That's not the kind of artist you want to be? It's not hip enough? You want to be a tattoo artist because of the cool lifestyle? Right?

How fun it would be to sit around all day and rap with all the local, hip people who are also into tattoos. And the benefits are terrific. You get to arrive to work at noon and draw butterflies on ladies' bottoms. How cool is that? All you need is a bunch of flash. Forget that! Just get a stack of tattoo magazines, a Xerox machine and start making copies. The customer doesn't care. I mean, how hard can tracing a Bob Roberts' design be? It's not like Bob Roberts is around to do anything about it anyway. In fact, why not get little stickers with prices and put them on the pages of the magazines right next to the photos? That way, the tattoo magazine can be like a catalog. And, lord knows, you can order the equipment and the ink that you need on the Internet. And why waste time serving an apprenticeship with some old-timer? Just work out of your garage. That way it's all profit!

Back years ago, when I first got obsessed with traditional southern blues music, there were very few acoustic records available. To learn how to play a song properly, I'd have to sit for hours over some scratchy recording of Pinewood Tom and figure out which strings to pick and what chords to mash down, so it would sound right. Each movement, each subtle twitch of a fingertip, had to be arrived at through hours and hours of trial and error. Dozens and dozens of techniques had to be mastered and built layer upon layer to produce a clear and musical tone. Reproducing the basic chordings of Leadbelly's 12-string or Maybelle Carter's archtop was the foundation. Then Ron Hale taught me Blind Boy Fuller's *Weeping Willow Blues*. That rhythmic sense helped me understand the crash-and-thump bass of Mance Lipscomb. I learned from Mance himself in the lobby of the Ash Grove on Melrose. He taught me *Ella Speed* and *Shine on Harvest Moon*.

I remember John Piazza working with me to learn Mississippi John's *Candyman*. I worked on the low part, while Piazza unscrambled the section up at the 12th fret. We compared notes by phone and figured the whole thing out by morning.

Come on, ladies, won't you gather near?

Sweet Candyman is here.

I listened to the record get scratchier and scratchier as I mastered *capo on the second fret with a sixth string lead and five-four, five-four bass in A*. Then, with bleeding fingers, no sleep and the help of Ry Cooder, I tackled Blind Blake's *Diddle Wah Diddle*.

Today, the young guitar hotshots can play circles around me. They play twice as many notes per second as I ever could—in half the time! These new kids have a thousand step-by-step videos to copy from. And there must be twice that number of instruction books. No laboring over some thrashed 78 for them. They skip the apprenticeship. Working from the ground up would just slow them down. Forget that.

The problem is, of course, that the young phenomenons can't really play anything. Not all the way through, anyway. And they certainly can't sing and pick at the same time. But, man, can they lay down a blinding spasm of notes!

It's kind of the same with tattooing. There's every kind of equipment imaginable just by calling a 800 number. Sure there's stacks and stacks of tattoo photos to Xerox, but what about drawing a freehand circle, laying in ink that lasts or coming up with an original design that makes a difference?

In any event, it's like anything worth doing; it's worth doing right. And maybe, if you really want to be a tattoo artist the caliber of Bob Roberts, you should learn how to back yourself up on *Wildwood Flower* with a flatpick before you start buying tattoo machines through the mail. ■

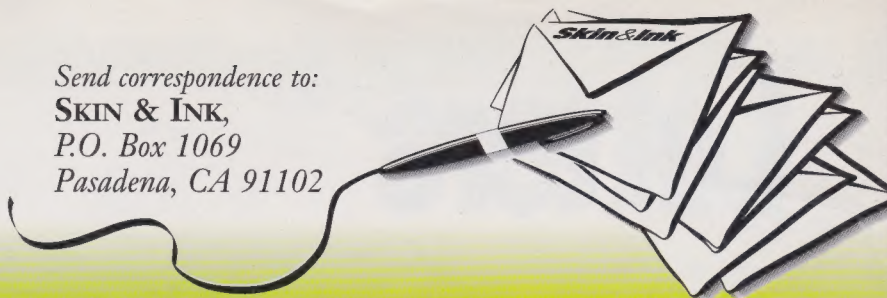
Bob Baxter

—Bob Baxter, Editor in Chief



SKIN & INK Letters

Send correspondence to:
SKIN & INK,
P.O. Box 1069
Pasadena, CA 91102



Dear SKIN & INK:

I run the online magazine *BME, Body Modification E-zine*. It covers traditional modifications such as piercing, tattooing and scarification, and a large part focuses on more heavy-duty modifications such as subincision, tongue splitting, fingernail relocation, implants, extreme vacuum pumping, unusual piercings and similar subjects. I'd like to write a column or series of articles for your magazine. Each installment would focus on a different heavy-duty modification. My recommendation for a first article would be tongue splitting or new surface piercing techniques.

—Shannon Larratt
Toronto, Canada

Dear Shannon:

Subincisions, tongue splitting, fingernail relocation, new surface piercing? Arrrrgh! Thank you very much for your letter. I appreciate your thinking of SKIN & INK for possible projects. However, I must tell you that our editorial policy usually excludes articles and photo features on body modifications such as piercing, scarring, etc. To us, tattooing is an art form unrelated to these more aggressive modifications that you mention, except perhaps, for the fact that they involve skin. Besides the pain, similarities between tattooing and piercing ends there as far as I am concerned. Tattoo art combines color, graphics and design—the rudiments of artistic expression. I'm certain that there is an art to piercing, scarring and body modification but, to be frank, it's lost on me. Tongue splitting? Gadzooks!

—Editor

Dear Bob:

Getting me to write is like pulling teeth! I think part of my mental block about writing to you was that, originally, I was going to write and tell you a little bit more about my philosophical approach to tattooing. I know you gave me total reign to say whatever I wanted when you interviewed me [feature story on Vyvyn in the March 1998 issue of SKIN & INK], but, for some reason, I never did. So, here's a few additional things that I feel are a big part of who I am.

I've always thought of tattooing as a means for personal story telling. It's an intentional, thoughtful, willful act that celebrates life. I always thought, *What could be more powerful than to have a personal talisman with you for the rest of your life?*

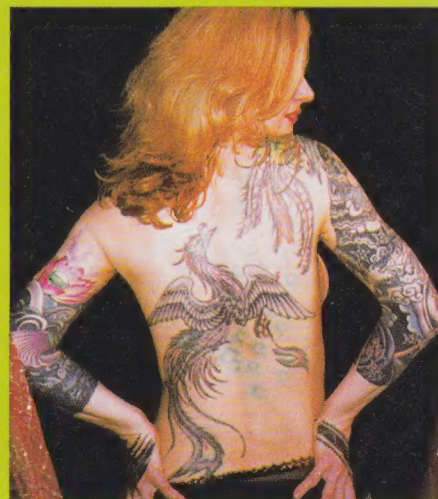
My work is always one of exploration and playing with how shapes and colors work with the body. I've always loved the nonliteral images that are almost Zen-like. They seem to stimulate the imagination. Like any artist, things progress from one study to the next, never becoming complacent. My challenge is to keep combining shapes from nature with other classical archetypes and seeing how they suit the individual. It's a constant process of mastering and refining.

I like the idea of sharing cooperatively instead of competitively. I'm motivated to do work that inspires me. Usually, if it inspires me, it will do the same for others. I'm fortunate now to have two great artists working with me: Tina Bafaro and Collin Ownsby. It's fun to share and rebound ideas off of them. For about 13 years, I worked by myself, and it was

very lonely, but just another experience. Because of it, I don't take a lot of things for granted.

I think that the pain aspect of tattooing is like experiencing a form of "letting go." The idea of laying on the table and having pain inflicted is one of surrender. To me, it's a type of relinquishing the ego or a mini-death. Letting go so that something new can be reborn, for me, is a metaphor for living life. I've always thought of my own life as a series of transitions, many mini-deaths and rebirths along the way. This is why I originally had Don Ed Hardy tattoo those three phoenix birds around my body in the '70s. All in all, I can't think of a better way to learn more about myself than to have relationships with the public and also be simultaneously involved in the creative process. Thank you again.

—Vyvyn
Seattle, Washington



VYVYN Tattoos by: Tom Yeomans, Ed Hardy, Juli Moon, Don Nolan and Tina Bafaro

Dear Bob:

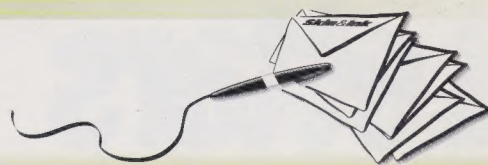
I shall go straight to the point: SKIN & INK needs to become a monthly publication. By the time you print a new issue, the other magazines have already covered many of the topics that SKIN & INK features. The November 1997 issue of *International Tattoo Art*, for instance, featured a review of Madame Chinchilla's book *Stewed, Screwed & Tattooed*, a note on J.D. Crowe's *Tattoo Art Books*, even something with Ann Peace, all of which could be found in the January 1998 issue of SKIN & INK. Even if you do it better, they did it first, and I get a feeling of *deja vu*. Of course, such features as the Tattooed Indians of North America and Amsterdam Tattoos are securing your position ahead of the competition, in my opinion. But I'm still hoping for a monthly SKIN & INK in 1998 (weekly would be idyllic!).

—Luke Zietek
Ink Designs Tattoo
St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands

Dear Luke:

Just think, if you read only SKIN & INK, you won't miss anything! Seriously, I agree with you that first is good. And, in the case of the Chinchilla and J.D. Crowe books, we mentioned them as soon as J.D. and Chi Chi sent us samples. However, it's like any new item, whether it be a newly published book or the latest movie; you tend to see the review repeated in several publications at about the same time. That's how publishers and movie produc-

Letters



ers help advertise their products. How many times do you read different commentaries on the latest Kevin Costner flick? In the case of *Ann Peace*, that *other* article you saw was about her brother, and, although it did show a photo of Ms. Peace, it did not contain interviews or information about Ann herself. Anyway, we're happy to see Ann Peace get some much deserved attention. I get your point Luke, and I'd like to publish monthly too. Hopefully, we will be able to accomplish that goal relatively soon, with the support of you and other like-minded tattoo enthusiasts from all over the world.

—Editor

Dear Editor:

Your jam-packed January issue convinced me to subscribe. I can look at a million magazines for flash, but your features on tattoo history, nontattoo (but 'super-cool!') art and cutting-edge tattoo practice are invaluable. As a woman tattooist I'd love to see more features like the one on Ann Peace and Pepe. Two very inspiring ladies. Thanks and keep it up!

—Thia "Fish" Jennings
San Francisco, California

Dear SKIN & INK:

I just wanted to drop you folks a line saying thanks for putting together such a classy tattoo magazine. Way to go, Larry Flynt! Enough of that. I've got a couple of questions I hope you might be able to answer. I am an airbrush artist by trade, and I also teach airbrush and several illustration classes at an art college in Savannah, Georgia. My question to SKIN & INK is: Where could an artist with a lot of potential and formal art training get the appropriate education to become a professional tattoo artist without having to beg the local scratchers for some studio time? I have convinced my college to let me teach a basic tattoo design class this coming spring quarter, but I can not give my students applicable information beyond the research I have done on the subject. I know as much as can be known through reading and hanging out in various studios, but I am curious to know if there is a school that will actually let someone get the gun in their hand for experience. And, if there isn't such a school, why hasn't anyone started one? If more traditional artists begin to back our brothers and sisters in the tattoo industry, we can destroy the stereotypical attitudes that all tattooists fight to justify their field as a real form of art. I would also like to issue a formal challenge to all the traditional artists out there who might be reading this magazine to expand your artistic horizons by supporting your local professional tattoo artists through learning more about tattoo history. Let's try to stick together on this, everyone. I look forward to SKIN & INK's continued success. See ya at the conventions!

—Prof. Brian Stewart
Savannah College of Art & Design
Savannah, Georgia

Dear Prof. Stewart:

I'm a bit confused. Although you certainly seem to have your heart in the right place, you say you don't have the hands-on experience

and, yet, you refer to yourself as backing "our brothers and sisters in the tattoo industry." Maybe it's just semantics, but doesn't the word "our" imply that you consider yourself one of the family? From what you say, that just doesn't seem to be the case as yet. The way we see it, becoming a member of the tattoo family includes a little less of the schoolroom, and more mopping floors, making needles, wiping down counters, serving an apprenticeship and, most important, mastering the operation and maintenance of the steam-assisted autoclave. After dealing with all that essential good stuff, comes the development of solid technique in order to ensure that the resulting designs will stand the test of time. Sure, there are some skilled graphic artists who jump right in by simply replacing their colored pencils with a tattoo machine, but, to me, that is like a classical guitarist playing blues from sheet music. The notes are there, but the essential *mojo* isn't. I'm admittedly on thin ice explaining this so I will forward your letter to Zeke Owen (especially the part about having a tattoo artist school) and perhaps he will respond to you in a future Ask Zeke column. I can't wait to read his reply.

—Editor

Dear SKIN & INK:

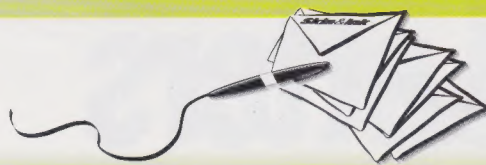
First off, I'd like to congratulate you on your mag. It is the best out there. There's been something I've been wondering about for two years now. Maybe you can help. It's about two tattoos that the late Shannon Hoon of the rock group Blind Melon had. I'd like to know who the artist is and where Hoon got them done. The two I'm talking about are the bugs around his neck (are they crickets?) and the poem *God's Presence*, which was on his left arm. To receive the answer would be greatly appreciated. I know his grandmother wrote the poem 113 years ago. Did he write it in his own handwriting and have it tattooed? Just gotta know.

—LostBoy
Rockford, Illinois

Dear SKIN & INK:

In your January 1998 issue, Aqua Yang from Taiwan asked for addresses of tattoo shops in Finland. It pleases me to hear that someone on the other side of the world is interested in the tattoo scene of our country. However, I agree with the editor: Finding an artist who you feel comfortable with and who can create the right piece for you should be your primary concern, no matter where he or she is located. If you are in a foreign country for just a short tourist visit, this can be difficult. Getting a good tattoo is made all the more problematic by the fact that, in most countries, the best tattoo artists can have waiting lists several months long, Finland being no exception. I personally have one much cherished "travel mark," a chestpiece done in Scotland a few years ago. I was able to have it done because I stayed in the country long enough to be able to meet the guy (hello Davie at Highland Tattoo Studio, Inverness—hope you're doing good!), talk to him, check out his shop and what he had done before, plan the work with him and finally put it on skin. I also already had a pretty clear idea of what I wanted when I first stepped into his studio. So my advice to Aqua is that, if you want to get tattooed as far away from home as Finland, make sure you have enough time to go to a few different studios,

More Letters



select your artist and then carry out whatever kind of project you have in mind without a rush. Or, if none of the artists you meet seem to have what you're looking for—wait. Don't be discouraged. There are several highly skilled tattooists in Finland today and they're not hard to find, especially at conventions. The biggest annual one takes place in Helsinki, usually sometime around March.

Some 15 years ago, there were no authorized tattoo shops in Finland. Tattooing existed underground, and people went abroad to get tattooed. Today, all of that is hard to imagine. In the biggest cities, you can find licensed tattoo studios by checking the Yellow Pages. I got my first tattoo in 1990 from a guy called Iivu Asunta at Iivu's Tattoos, the first official tattoo studio in Finland, located in a beautiful rural area of Rouvesi in the central part of the county. At the moment, I'm having slightly bigger work done by an artist called Eppu Walli in Helsinki, where I live. Recently, tattooing in Finland really has grown in a massive way, but it hasn't reached the point where it's so common that it is not exciting any more. I would like to emphasize once more that travelers who are thirsty for some Finnish ink should do some research beforehand and take their time. You will need an appointment. You can't just pop in from the airport, get inked and fly off again.

To SKIN & INK I would like to say that I warmly welcome your new format. I picked up the premiere issue of your magazine some years ago and was totally unimpressed until I saw the cover of your September 1997 issue advertising the article on tattooing among the Native American peoples. I bought it because of that story and was pleasantly surprised to see that everything had changed. Long, informative articles on interesting subjects and a professional touch. Among the many and varied tattoo magazines, SKIN & INK now



SAMI

seems to be one of the very few to be taken seriously. Okay, I too could live without *Bunny* or the *Babes*, but they certainly don't make the rest of your publication any less valuable to the readers. Including both sexes in the *Babes* section is the right thing to do, and I guess these pictures can be seen as part of the fun side to tattooing. In thinking about what makes the tattoo culture so rich is that it offers endless possibilities

to philosophize on its meaning, and to educate oneself about its history and different styles. Yet, at the same time, tattoos are strongly physical, they look good, they're sexy, they're cool and just plain fun like nothing else. Let's not forget that. After all, it's a happy thing.

—Sami Kauppinen
Helsinki, Finland

P.S. Say hello to Bunny for me. I hope I didn't hurt her by my comments. I didn't mean to!

Dear SKIN & INK:

I see you changed the SKIN & INK *Babes* section to SKIN & INK *Pinups*. I always liked the photos of beautiful people and their tattoos, especially the March 1998 centerfold Jennifer, and the section was very classy, but I thought the term "babes" was sexist and unflattering. I definitely like the new title much better.

—Garineth Shabmadian
Yerevan, Armenia

Dear Garineth:

Over the last 12 months, we probably received more mail regarding the SKIN & INK *Babes* section than any other feature in the magazine. Although some readers voiced their dislike of the entire centerfold concept, most of the negative mail focused solely on the use of the name "babes." When we planned our very first issue back in May of 1997, we wanted to feature a centerfold section, if for no other reason than to acknowledge, in a somewhat satirical way, our admiration and respect for our benefactor and publisher, Mr. Larry Flynt. Our centerfold was, in effect, our heartfelt homage to his flagship magazine, HUSTLER. But, more importantly, the *Babes* section was the perfect venue to showcase some surprisingly gifted photographers and provide for them a place to experiment and showcase the best of their rarely seen portrait work.

Initially, we thought that using this somewhat chauvinistic, Robert-Mitchum-talking-to-Lana-Turner, cigarette-dangling-from-the-corner-of-his-mouth term would provide the correct L.A.-in-the-'40s, film noir vibe that we were after. Along with that, we definitely wanted to include both sexes and felt that the term "babe" fit either a man or a woman. To support this supposition, we have often heard women refer to men as "babes" and vice versa. We must have heard wrong.

Keep in mind that the staff at SKIN & INK does not want to publish some wimpy, middle-of-the-road, feckless rag that takes its editorial direction from little old ladies from Pasadena (where our editorial offices are located, by the way), but I do feel it is sometimes more prudent to be politically correct when it better reflects our true feelings concerning the philosophical issues of sexual equality and respect. So, although from time to time, we may, on our pages, refer to some beautiful young woman as a "tomato" or a handsome gentleman with movie-star looks as a "bunk," it is done lovingly and without malice. Yes, it is a bitter pill to swallow, but even our most fervent beliefs can be reformulated through enlightened discourse. So, dear readers, while the new title, SKIN & INK *Pinups*, may not generate as much interesting mail, I trust that it will be a lot more acceptable, not only to its current fans, but also to a new audience of nongender-specific babes from here to Yerevan.

—The Editor

Dear SKIN & INK:

I have been a loyal reader of your magazine for three years and I enjoy the refreshing new format. Great job, keep it up! To the people who refuse to accept change and grow: Screw 'em. I'm writing because I was impressed with the portrait tattoos in the March '98 issue—on page 83 the face of Marilyn Manson by Mike Cole of Class Act Tattooing, and page

Letters



86 of the WWF Undertaker's face done by Micro of Explosive Tattooing. To the person who has the Undertaker tattoo: You should be extremely proud of your piece. I was impressed! I've been a fan of the Undertaker for many years so I understand the bond. A mighty hand of "death" to you! Keep kickin' ass, SKIN & INK!

—*Sberyl Hoepner*
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Dear SKIN & INK:

Let me compliment you on a top-notch, first-class publication. I just picked up the January '98 issue and what impressed me the most was the fact that there was not one ad for tattoo equipment, which I find responsible! Keep up the great work.

—*Chris B.*
Lucky Devil Tattoo
Daytona, Florida

Dear Editor:

As a tattooist who for the past ten-plus years has become a specialist in cosmetic enhancement, I was impressed that you would feature an extensive article on the subject in your November issue. I wish that more people interested in receiving this service would truly inquire about the many sources, take time to become better informed and proceed with caution. It really can be a painless, permanent and continually rewarding experience to receive and to be able to apply [permanent cosmetics] correctly.

—*Gina Dwyer*
Private Eyes
Tucson, Arizona

Dear SKIN & INK:

Thank you for the article on the *Dying Art of Egyptian Tattooing* by Tim Coleman. We found it very informative and interesting. We have cut it out and mounted some of the article on our museum wall for the enjoyment of our tattoo museum visitors.

—*Triangle Tattoo & Museum*
Ft. Bragg, California

Dear Editor in Chief:

Thank you for taking the time to read my article. I appreciate your comments and have a few comments of my own.



Rock of Ages by CHRIS B.

Your view [March 1998 issue] that Tattoo Tour San Francisco was the "Event of the Millennium" leaves me perplexed. It's hard to believe that a seasoned tattooist [Zeke Owen] actually made that statement, *and* that you agree. I have the same gut feeling right now as I did when I heard of a tattooist that did 82 tattoos in 22 hours. Ahem!

I have a hard time seeing the benefits of such events or statements. It puts a very cheap (I'm not talking money) value on tattooing. My prediction for the new year is: Mr. Owen won't be writing for you long; he doesn't have the courage to tell it how it should be or how it really is. He won't even say who his ten favorite tattooers for this month are. If SKIN & INK continues to promote that type of thinking, inking and reasoning, it will lead to your demise also, just at a slower rate of decay. I don't understand why you put so much trust in Mr. Owen. Just because he has 30 or 40 years experience doesn't mean he understands every aspect of the profession, no more than I do with 15 years experience. I do, however, have more experience in large, original, full-body tattooing, which puts me at the opposite to Mr. Owen. I have just as much and maybe more logical, reliable and current information to share with the rest of the profession. Please reread and print my article as it is now.

In the past 20 years there have been far better tattoo conventions than this one. This was the worst show that I've personally seen in 13 years. I wonder what Mr. Owen was thinking when he said, "Event of the Millennium." Personally, I too had a good time. The good, however, didn't outweigh the bad when you look at the overall position the tattoo show/convention circuit is in. It is dying. This show sucked, and you know it. It didn't even have an emcee. These tattoo show/convention organizers need to reevaluate how tattooing is being promoted at these shows. If you would print my article as is, you would eventually see what I'm talking about. The good from this article would soon outweigh the bad, and the result of your courage to print it would soon be recognized everywhere! My views are on the mark.

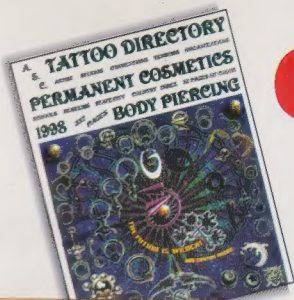
—*Kelly Miller*
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Kelly:

Whew! You're just all warm and cuddly, aren't you? I can't wait for your next appearance on the Rush Limbaugh Show. And I thought that coming from Salt Lake City, you would be a really groovy, happening kind of guy. You are talking about the Tattoo Tour San Francisco, aren't you? Funny, I didn't see you at the table with Philadelphia Eddy, Jack Rudy, Bob Roberts, Brian Everett and Tattoo Zeke, or hanging out with Hanky Panky, Sabado, Bernie Luther or Tim Tin. Perhaps you were over by the candy machine in the foyer.

You know, Kelly Miller, from where Zeke and Joe surveyed the scene, it was the "Event of the Millennium." I just don't think that the view was quite the same from where you were invited to sit.

—*Editor*



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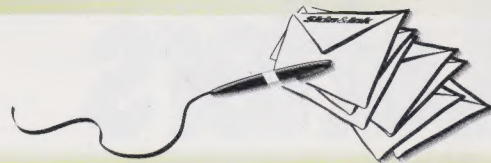
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Letters



86 of the WWF Undertaker's face done by Micro of Explosive Tattooing. To the person who did it: You should be extremely proud! I've been a fan of the Undertaker since I understand the bond. A mighty bond. Keep kickin' ass, SKIN & INK!

Dear SKIN & INK:

Let me compliment you on a top-notch, first-class publication. I just picked up the January '98 issue and what impressed me the most was the fact that there was not one ad for tattoo equipment, which I find responsible! Keep up the great work.

—Chris B.
Lucky Devil Tattoo
Daytona, Florida

Dear Editor:

As a tattooist who for the past ten-plus years has become a specialist in cosmetic enhancement, I was impressed that you would feature an extensive article on the subject in your November issue. I wish that more people interested in receiving this service would truly inquire about the many sources, take time to become better informed and proceed with caution. It really can be a painless, permanent and continually rewarding experience to receive and to be able to apply [permanent cosmetics] correctly.

—Gina Dwyer
Private Eyes
Tucson, Arizona

Dear SKIN & INK:

Thank you for the article on the *Dying Art of Egyptian Tattooing* by Tim Coleman. We found it very informative and interesting. We have cut it out and mounted some of the article on our museum wall for the enjoyment of our tattoo museum visitors.

—Triangle Tattoo & Museum
Ft. Bragg, California

Dear EDITOR IN CHIEF:

Thank you for taking the time to read my article. I appreciate your comments and have a few comments of my own.

Your view [March 1998 issue] that Tattoo Tour San Francisco was the "Event of the Millennium" leaves me perplexed. I am a tattooist [Zeke Owen] ac-

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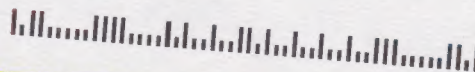
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too show/convention circuit is in. It is dying, sucked, and you know it. It didn't even have an emcee. These tattoo show/convention organizers need to reevaluate how tattooing is being promoted at these shows. If you would print my article as is, you would eventually see what I'm talking about. The good from this article would soon outweigh the bad, and the result of your courage to print it would soon be recognized everywhere! My views are on the mark.

—Kelly Miller
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Kelly:

Whew! You're just all warm and cuddly, aren't you? I can't wait for your next appearance on the Rush Limbaugh Show. And I thought that coming from Salt Lake City, you would be a really groovy, happening kind of guy. You are talking about the Tattoo Tour San Francisco, aren't you? Funny, I didn't see you at the table with Philadelphia Eddy, Jack Rudy, Bob Roberts, Brian Everett and Tattoo Zeke, or hanging out with Hanky Panky, Sabado, Bernie Luther or Tin Tin. Perhaps you were over by the candy machine in the foyer.

You know, Kelly Miller, from where Zeke and Joe surveyed the scene, it was the "Event of the Millennium." I just don't think that the view was quite the same from where you were invited to sit.

—Editor



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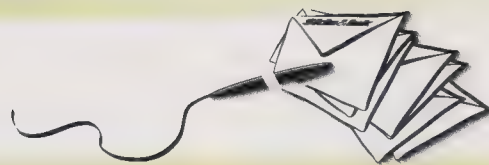
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More Letters



Dear SKIN & INK:

I enjoyed reading your article on Running Bear. Wish you could have shown more pictures of his work. I have but one question for you: In the same September issue you refer to Brian Everett as the "King of Route 66." Does this make Running Bear the "King of Highway 666?"

—Broz
Diné Nation
Shiprock, New Mexico



Dear SKIN & INK:

I have been reading SKIN & INK ever since the first issue went out on the newsstands. For me, the changes I have seen over the last year have been upscale—both photos and articles. SKIN & INK is artistic in more than one way; not just the photographs of tattoos but also the writing. Take *Bunny* for example. You always get people crying about *Bunny* being in SKIN & INK. Yet there must be something about *Bunny* to keep them checking it out, and I think it is the fact that she is the kind of adventurous person the readers themselves would like to be. It makes me sick to hear complaints about *Bunny*. It is a modern comic. If you don't enjoy the articles, you must not enjoy the artwork, because they are one. SKIN & INK is done by artists in order to bring better understanding and education about a 6,000-year-old art form. The only way to get the word out is by showing many different types

of tattoos and writing serious articles as well as articles that provide a little fun at the same time. That's where *Bunny* comes in. No matter how big a tattoo is, or how small, there is always going to be an adventure to it, and *Bunny* is one of those women who is always involved in an adventure. I am one of the lucky ones. I have an inked woman in my life by the name of Sara McCoy, and, if I don't read *Bunny* first, she reads it to me. So get off *Bunny*'s back, 'cause she gives me a good laugh. Enjoy SKIN & INK for the art, the artists and the articles. Enjoy every bit of SKIN & INK. What have you got to lose? Nothing. In fact, you might just broaden your mind.

—Larry Flynt Jr.
Beverly Hills, California

Dear Editor:

Thanks so much for making *Skin & Ink* a magazine I can be proud to be featured in.

Joe Vegas is the man, and the new *Skin & Ink* is the bomb.

I kiss you very, very strong,

PEPE



TAT-E-BONICS

The Essential
Dictionary of
1990's Tattoo Lingo



by Michael
J. Cushman

New Digs	New Tattoo
Art Junkie	Serious Collector
Two Twos	Baby Talk for Tattoo
Spray Clean	Green Soap
Points	Needles
Skinner	Tattooist
Ink Pad	Tattoo Shop
Hummer	Tattoo Gun
Color Guard	Tattooed Friends
Ink Slapping	Sex
Wanked	Possessing a Strange Tattoo
Store Nipples	Ink Caps
Oops Pen	Scribe Pen
Scratch Pad	Lease Form
Condom Hands	Surgical Gloves
Billboard	Backpiece
B.A.T.	Bad Ass Tattoo
F.A.T.	Freakin' Awesome Tattoo
Group Therapy	Tattoo Convention

HipShots

FEATURING

Dianne Mansfield



Henry Goldfield



*Katzen of Incredible Ink,
Austin, Texas*



Gill Montie and daughter, Sheila



Paul Booth

East Meets West in Hollywood

In the world of tattooing, most enthusiasts are impressed with the list of celebrities that walk through the door at Sunset Strip Tattoo in West Hollywood. But for world-renowned and most humble tattoo artist Greg James (who specializes in Japanese-style tattooing), nothing could be more impressive than having a master tattoo artist from Japan seek him out for a tattoo.

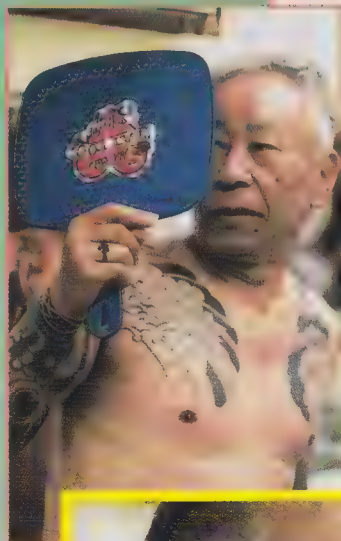
Choshiro Nakano, known throughout Japan as "Horicho," graced our shop with his presence during November of 1997. A client of Greg's, Masumi Fukuda, who is from Japan, introduced the two artists. Masumi received a traditional Japanese dragon from Greg, which he proudly displayed to his visiting friend Horicho. After seeing this tattoo, Horicho asked to meet Greg.

The experience for all of us at Sunset was wonderful. With the help of Masumi's translating, we learned that Horicho has been tattooing for 35 years, only recently using a machine to outline. With him was his beautiful wife Hoiomi Nakano, who wore a traditional bodysuit done by her husband Horicho.

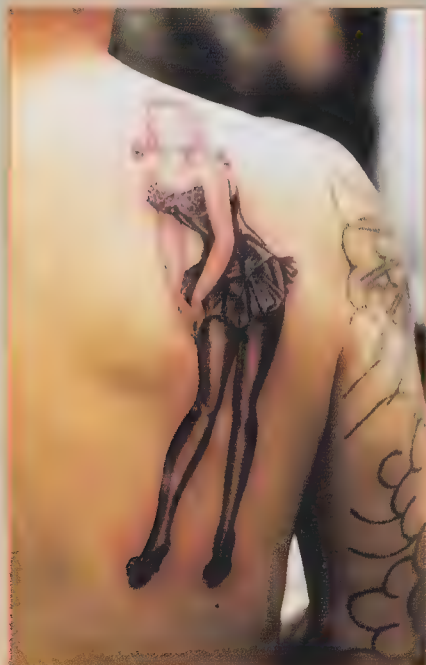
Horicho-san decided on a Vargas pinup girl for Greg to tattoo on his back. The tattoo took three hours. When they were done, Horicho and his wife graciously allowed us to photograph them. (A very high honor.) Horicho, pleased with his American-style tattoo, thanked Greg, and the two exchanged gifts.

We would like to thank Horicho, his wife, and Masumi and Miho Fukuda for stopping by our studio. We hope they will visit us again the next time they travel to the United States. ■

—Lisa Bernabe
Sunset Strip
Tattoo Studio



Photos by Chester Oswalt
Vargas Girl Tattoo by Greg James
Bodysuit by Choshiro Nakano



HOIOMI NAKANO





Tattoo by Ben Schaefer, Uta Linnos



Tattoo by Jesse Tuesday, Book Search



Tattoo by Jesse Tuesday, Book Search

Readers' Gallery

OOOOOPS!

On page 84 of the March issue, the tattoo by Jesse Tuesday was inadvertently printed upside down. In order to correct that error, we hereby reprint Mr. Tuesday's tattoo the way it was meant to be viewed.

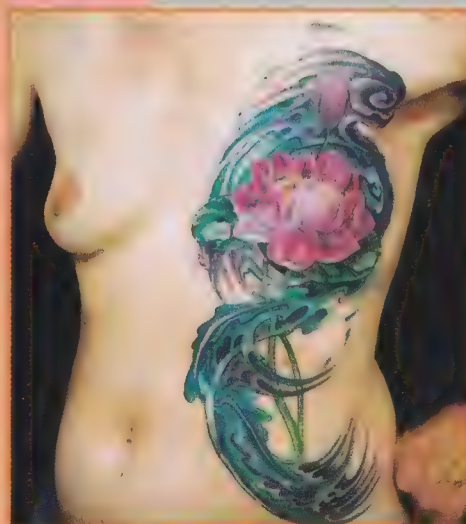
ATTENTION, VIETNAM VETS

Do you have tattoos related to the war in Vietnam? We will pay from \$25 to \$100 for each photograph upon publication. Try not to send photos that are too dark, too light, out-of-focus, unfinished, poorly framed, flash-burned or too small to make out proper detail. Please provide photographer, tattoo artist's name and sender's phone number. A short description or story about the tattoo, what it represents, etc., would be appreciated but is not necessary. Send to Vietnam Project, c/o SKIN & INK, P.O. Box 1069, Pasadena, CA 91102.

In the November 1997 issue of SKIN & INK, we featured an especially well-received article, *Permanent Cosmetics—Tattoo's Miraculous Cousin* by Brad M. Bucklin. In this article, Bucklin discussed the amazing, positive effects that cosmetic tattooing procedures can have on the lives of burn victims and the like. Although we included before-and-after photos showing the changes cosmetic tattooing can make, some readers commented that the comparative improvements came across on the page as somewhat subtle and difficult to discern. About the time the article was being printed, we visited Seattle to interview Vyvyn for the March '98 issue. I told her that we were doing an article on cosmetic tattooing, and, although too late to be included in the Bucklin article, Vyvyn showed me some dramatic photos that illustrated the significant transformation that one of Vyvyn's beautifully crafted tattoos had made on a female client wishing to cover the results of a radical mastectomy. The before-and-after comparison can hardly be described as subtle. We thank Vyvyn for allowing us to share this wonderful metamorphosis with our readers. ■

—Editor

COSMETIC
MAGIC
BY
VYVYN



Diggin' ~~in~~ Dirt

with Holly

Another issue, another party. This time we celebrated the 1st Anniversary of the "new" SKIN & INK, hosted by the hippest editor around, **Bob Baxter**, and those crazy cats at **Tabu Tattoo in West Los Angeles**. The party started at 8 p.m., and at 8:01, the place was jammed. Nearly 200 revelers joined the party to reflect back on the first big year and gobble up free copies of the March issue. **Tennessee Dave** brought his daughter (who, thank God, looks nothing like him!). Dave's brother **Greg James** was on the scene. **Bob Roberts** gave me another earful of lewd jokes. The staff of **Purple Panther** mingled and meandered. **Erika Stanley** brightened up the place. **Leo Zulueta** strolled through. **Dave Lumbert** from the **Tattoo Directory** took photos for his next edition. **Larry Flynt Jr.**, and the lovely **Sara**, hung out, and, of course, SKIN & INK staffers and contributors **Joe Vegas**, **Maurice Pacheco**, **Robin Perine**, **Swami Omananda**, **Joleen Marlow**, **Jodi Barr**, **Bruce Litz** and **Yvonne Hawker** helped polish off the food and drinks. Thank you once again, **Tabu Tattoo** and **R.J.** and **Dottie** for a lovely time. Now, who's gonna host this month's rabble-rouser?...

● Speaking of **Tabu Tattoo**, **Riley Baxter** has joined the **Tabu** staff and is doing, as usual, fantastic work. I stopped by the other day, and, man, they are busy, busy, busy...

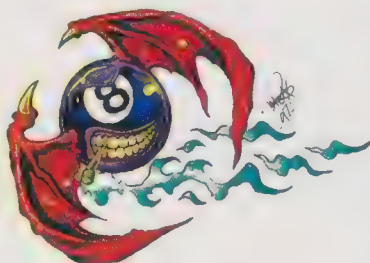
● The 10th Anniversary of the **1st Knoxville Tattoo Convention** put on by **Grandpa Groovy** was celebrated by the debut of the **Old School Tattoo Expo**. Cosponsor **Lyle Tuttle** said it was a wild time for all, with the highlight of the expo being the inductions of **George Burchett**, **Ace Harlin** and **Doc Forbes** into the **Tattoo Hall of Fame**. These three join the likes of **Les Skuse**, **Bert Grimm**, **Paul Rogers** and other immortals. By the way, for those of you squirming in your seats to get nominated for this prestigious honor, they don't take the live ones. So, as soon as you become a late, great legend, have your next of kin give **Lyle** a call...

● **Joe Johns** of **Pennsylvania's Wizard's World of Tattoos** took the award for his freehand at the **Old School Tattoo Expo**. This is no surprise, considering the plethora of freehand, custom pieces he's been turning out. Of the **Old School Expo**, **Joe** says this was definitely a "tattoo bash," and it was terrific to see the old and new coming together there in **Knoxville**...

● The **Old San Juan Tattoo Extravaganza** also wrapped up its first annual show. Word has it that the **Puerto Rican** public were as nice as apple pie, and all the American artists were treated like royalty. The Thursday night **Pirate Masquerade** party was a blimey good time with food, drinks and an awesome fireworks show. **Maj Matthews** took home the award for **Queen of the Pirates**, which she credits to "Running around with my butt hanging out in a leather G-string!" Sounds like the fireworks weren't the only show to watch...

● **Maj and Rick Matthews'** shop, **Backbraking Tattoos and Body Piercing** in **Eau Claire, Wisconsin**, is preparing for a move down the street to a bigger location. They're also getting ready for the trek to **England** where they managed to secure one of the prestigious **Dunstable** booths...

● Unfortunately, June 27 through 29 is the last **Dunstable** show. The venue for this legendary tattoo expo will be turned into a mall (see **Dunstable** article, SKIN & INK, May 1998). We're still waiting on the announcement of the '99 venue. For information, contact **Ian** of **Redding** at 011-44-118-959-8616...



● The queen of the Celtic Turf, **Pat Fish** of **Tattoo Santa Barbara** in **Southern California**, has a terrific Web site that includes a fabulous Celtic bibliography for those who

want to re-search their own designs.

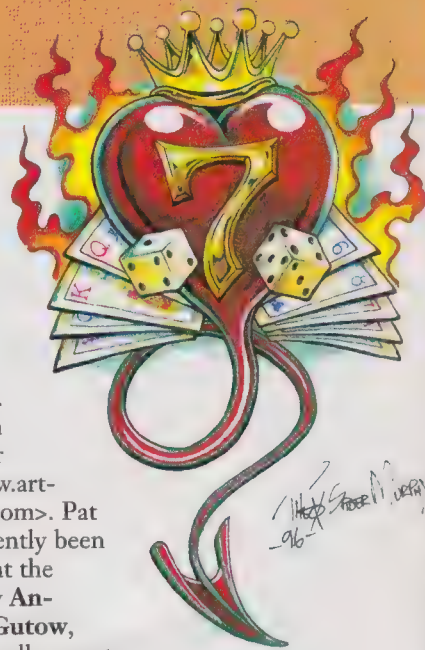
You can find her at <www.art-tattoo.com>. **Pat** has recently been joined at the shop by **Andreas Gutow**, who handles most of the walk-ins. Because of **Andreas**, **Pat** can concentrate on her Celtic design specialty. **Pat** is also gearing up for the filming of an upcoming special on women tattoo artists. Look for it on **Turner TV**...

● Also on the Web, **Trevor Marshall** of **Oceanic Tatau** is the showcased artist at <www.inkshow.com>. **Trevor** does some truly outstanding Polynesian work and is definitely worth checking out...

● According to **Frank DeLuca** of **Am-Jam Incorporated** out of **Schenectady, New York**, this year's **Am-Jam Tattoo Expo** was one of the best yet. Booths included **Mt. Vernon Tattoo & Supply** with **Joe Kaplan**, **Fine Line Tattoo** of the **Netherlands** and **Coney Island Freddie** with **Vix Vapor Tattoo Studio**. Three thousand-plus attendees roamed the halls of the **Schenectady Armory**, which is more participants than a good military exercise and a lot less wounded. Winning artists for the '98 **Am-Jam Expo** contests were as follows:

Tattoo Don: *Best Backpiece* on **John Lang**
Joe Forth: *Best Sleeve* on **Russ Weydener**
Scott Lunn: *Most Realistic* on **Junior Ott**
Joe Forth: *Most Unusual* on **Brian Peceu**
Dave Digiacomo: *Best Individual* on **Rich Well**

● **Deana** of the **3rd Annual International Marked for Life Female Tattoo Artist Expo** was very happy with



the new hotel accommodations this year. The digs were bigger, better, nicer and boasted a heated pool and Jacuzzi. The amenities relaxed everyone enough to insure an abundance of donated raffle prizes for the annual **Shriners Disabled Children's Fund**. Winning artists for the 3rd Annual Marked for Life Expo included:

Monique Weisbaden: *Best Color*
Judy Parker: *Best Black and Grey*
on Michel Secrest
Brian Everett: *Best Portrait*
on Feather Russell
Trevor Marshall: *Best Tribal*
on Juli Moon
Rich Ives: *Best Realistic* on Bill Roberts
Juli Moon: *Best Backpiece*
on Jeannie Vodnik
Feather Russell: *Best Sleeves*
on J. Morse

● **California** has passed **Assembly Bill 186** regarding tattooing, body piercing and permanent cosmetics. This bill affects the sterilization, sanitation and safety standards for the entire industry. The way it works is, all tattooists must pay a one-time registration fee and sign off on health-department standards. Shops will also pay for an annual health inspection. Now, there's two sides to this: I'm all for health inspections and sanitation standards. It will definitely be a relief to know that all shops are subject to a least minimal operating guidelines. However, I'm a little concerned about individual registration and reporting of business operations. Maybe I'm paranoid, but I hate the idea of having to report to some agency every time I change my business location. Makes me feel like I'm on parole. I'm also a little concerned that there is no fee cap in this bill. Counties are able to add whatever fees they "deem necessary" for costs. Then again, I am a paranoid individual. But that doesn't mean they're not watching me...

● On the other hand, I am completely pissed about **California Senate Bill 1700** introduced by **Senator Tom Hayden**. This bill is appropriating three-million smackeroos to purchase tattoo removal equipment for juvenile detention facilities. Tattoo removal candidates are defined as either a male

with tattoos on the lower arm, hand, neck or head, or a female with any tattoos that would be visible in the professional work environment. I am hotter than a **Freddy Corbin** pinup about this one! Besides the inherent stereotypical racial and gender prejudice written directly into the bill, there is no language anywhere that asks for the tattooee's permission! You guys have got to help me out here. Go to <www.leginfo.ca.gov> to contact your favorite California legislator. And give 'em hell...

● Another note regarding tattooing legalities: It appears that **Florida statute 877.04** states that only persons licensed to practice medicine or dentistry or persons under the general supervision of a licensed person can tattoo. Huh? I assumed this was some sort of albatross languishing in the books. However, in looking into its history, I see the statute was originally passed in 1959 and has since been revised in 1969, 1971, 1977, 1992, 1993 and 1997 without the original wording being changed. Can someone in Florida who is informed about this idiocy drop me a line and let me know what's up?...

● **Tattoo Club Holland** is hosting its **8th Annual Tattoo Sunday** in, you guessed it, Holland. This is the oldest annual meeting in Holland and the only one organized by a tattoo club. Although this might not be the biggest convention, I hear it's most certainly one of the nicest groups of people in all of Europe. They are expecting such artists as **David Kotker** from **Chicago**, **Guido Custom** of **Belgium**, **Eus** from **Holland** and **Crazy Walter** out of **Germany**. You can fax Tattoo Club Holland at 011-31-26-362-8498...

● Also on the horizon, the **7th Annual Inkslingers' Ball** at the Hollywood Palladium in star-studded **Hollywood, California**, September 19 through 20. This show always draws the wildest crowd this side of Route 66, insuring memories to last a lifetime (excepting the requisite blackout periods). Contact **Tattoo Mania** or **Fred Saunders Productions** at (800) 824-8046 for details...

● The **5th Annual Inkin' the Valley Tattoo Convention** in **Wilkes-Barre**,

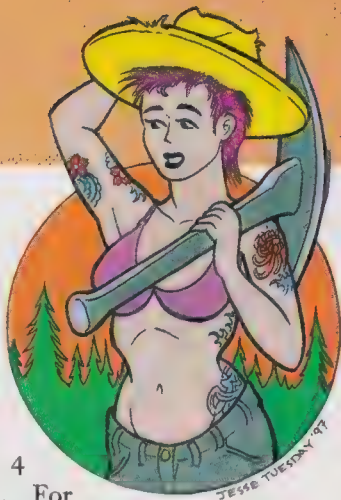
Pennsylvania is taking place **Labor Day Weekend**, September 4 through 6. For more information, contact **Zoob Productions** at (717) 823-9332 or <zoob1@microserve.net>...

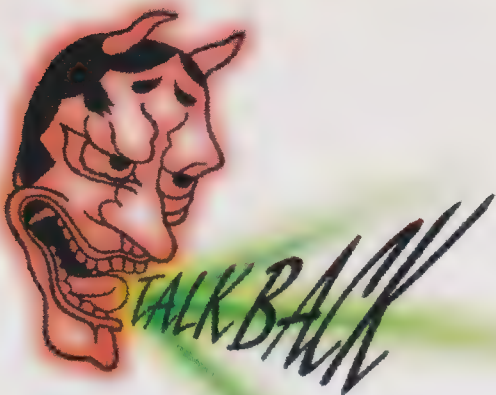
● **MAN, THAT-SURE-CAN-RUIN-YOUR-DAY DEPARTMENT:** **Brian Everett** from **Route 66** in **Albuquerque**, called to provide the latest update on his beautiful, candy apple red '50 Merc full custom that we featured in January's *Tattoo Artists and Their Rides* section. Seems that after Brian had spent a couple of months meticulously detailing the amazing Merc for the Oakland Custom Auto Show, he hit a patch of wet highway on the road to the event from New Mexico, causing the entire rig, including his Dodge truck and the enclosed trailer, into a tailspin. The damage to the Merc exceeded \$34,000. But Brian is philosophic about the whole thing. "Now I have time to go through my photos and pick out the ones to send to you guys," he told us with a laugh...

● Oh yeah, one more thing: In the March issue, that was not the late **Miami Lou** suddenly resurrected at the **Tattoo Tour**. I incorrectly referred to **Darin** of **Miami Lou Tattoo** as Miami Lou in a picture. I apologize. I'm sorry. I suck. And to anyone else whose name I misspelled or got wrong: Whadaya want from me? You got a free plug, for heaven's sake!...

That's the buzz... ■

—Holly Tuesday





A Special Letter to Mr. Vegas and his Timely Reply

THE INCOMING MISSAL

Dear SKIN & INK,

I really like what you have done with the new and improved magazine. It's a great way to keep up with the tattoo scene all over the world. The stories by Joe Vegas and Permanent Mark are a serious laugh, as well as being informative. I wish the *Ask Zeke* column were longer—at least eight pages!

Question: I had an entire backpiece done by Joe Vegas back in the early '90s, and every time I asked him if he was going to send the resulting photos into a magazine, Joe would give me another one of his speeches about why he hated tattoo publications. He would go on and on about how they were "bad for the industry," and why he didn't read them. Typically, he'd rave on for at least an hour. Don't get me wrong, I like reading the recent articles Vegas has done on Horiyoshi and Bob Roberts, but isn't all this a contradiction? What are you paying him to change his attitude toward tattoo magazines, anyway? I bet it's a bundle! Every time we watch that Larry Flynt movie on cable TV, my wife yells, "Joe Vegas has sold out and he's up there in that shiny, black jet right now!" So what's the deal here, guys? Has my man Vegas been seduced by the good life? Say it ain't true, Joe. Say it ain't true.

—Mark Kurland
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

THE RETALIATORY BARRAGE

Okay, that was the letter that we got, now here's my reply. I will attempt to break it down to the whole world how the men and women of SKIN & INK magazine are on a mission from God, and if anyone out there yearns to gaze upon the pearly gates of heaven along with us, they simply need to get in sync with both our motives and our modus operandi.

—Joe Vegas

Dear Mark,

Relax, tough guy, it's me, Vegas. Remember those hour-long speeches about cheesy tattoo magazines? Well, a while back I got a chance to do something about it besides complain. So, if you have a minute, I'll break it down for you.

At first, I set out to shake things up. Because of

my early efforts, I ended up with several people really pissed off at me. It took quite a while to get any positive feedback. In those early days, the editor and I were at each other's throats, fighting like cats and dogs. At one point, I remember using a bullhorn to amplify a death threat that I left on his telephone answering machine. I was catching flack from all sides, and even my marriage had begun to suffer. But I endured all this grief because I had an ace in the hole—a halfway translated interview with Horiyoshi III—and I felt an obligation to share it with the rest of the world.

Now the dust has somewhat settled, and I'm left to ponder whether or not it was worth it. Fortunately, the Horiyoshi interview generated a great deal of positive mail, and I was returned to the relatively good graces of the readership. Thank you all for your support, all you critics out there! It's 1 a.m. right now in Los Angeles, and my wife, wearing my bathrobe, just walked into our office at home and is giving me a neck massage. As I contemplate the hum of my computer and reflect back to all that has happened, I truly believe it was worth it and then some.

After a solid year of adhering to the *No Tattoo Supplier Advertising Policy* under his belt, Editor in Chief Bob Baxter has proven that his aim is true. So, at this point, I have only one small problem: How do I send photos of my own work into the *SKIN & INK Readers' Gallery* without looking like a wanker? I even coughed up a watercolor painting [see this issue's back cover] in order to buy myself some time until the list of big shot contributor names becomes distracting enough for me to sneak one or two of my own tattoo photos into the mix without calling attention to myself! I wonder if this is what some of you out there are thinking. Now that Filip Leu, Horiyoshi III, Sabado, Brian Everett, Bob Roberts and many more of your favorites have gotten the party started in the *Readers' Gallery*, you wouldn't want to miss out on being a member of this new and improved lineup, would you? Those extra photos of that big piece you did last week—don't be shy, send them in.

This is Joe Vegas, over and out.

P.S. It was fun while it lasted, but after Zeke and I got blamed for spilling cheese puffs and two cold sodas in the cockpit of Mr. Flynt's jet, management decided that we'd better use commercial aircraft. ■



Photos by Bob Baxter

VEGAS TAKES A SNOOZE

AT THE TATTOOS & BLUES

By Bob Baxter

Hanging out at the 7th Annual Tattoos & Blues was like a picnic in the park. Thanks to the genius of promoter Bert Rodriguez, this friendly, safe and energetic skin art and music festival went off without a hitch. The pink and personable Flamingo hotel in lovely Santa Rosa—just 90 freeway minutes north of the Golden Gate Bridge—was the perfect venue. And, imagine this, because of the comfortable size of the crowd and the fact that the kick-ass, loud music was confined to the barroom down the hall, you could actually talk to the person next to you in the exhibition room without having to shout. SKIN & INK's own Joe Vegas, *Capt. Eddie's* creator Bruce Litz and myself had just spent Saturday afternoon in San Francisco visiting Eddy Deutsche's 222 Tattoo on 8th Street, joining in on the usual hijinx. After an enjoyable few hours with Eddy, Jeff Rassier, Scott Sylvia and Jesse Tuesday, we reluctantly aimed the magic bus toward the horizon and ended up in Santa Rosa at about 10 p.m. It was way cool mentioning SKIN & INK at the ticket table and being *immediately* attended to in a courteous and highly professional manner. We felt welcome from the start.

The way the Flamingo is set up, there was a large main

room featuring about 40 artists, with a small side room devoted to purveyors of the predictable clothing, tricked-out leisure paraphernalia and black light posters. Inside the hall, there were three aisles of booths with another row at either end. Down the hall was the all-you-can-eat buffet and various live local bands pounding out 12-bar blues. The place was cooking. "We charge a lot less for the booths than most conventions," Rodriguez told me.

"This event is designed for the artists, and, by keeping the fees low and the number of participants to a minimum, we all come out ahead."

Although most of the booths represented local talent like Joe Leonard from Monkey Wrench Tattoo and Rodriguez's own Santa Rosa Tattoo, Bill Salmon from Diamond Club Tattoo, and Goldfield's namesake, the amazing Henry, both made the trek from the City by the Bay. SKIN & INK columnist C.W. Eldridge and the talented Melina Ebert, representing Tattoo Archive from Oakland, did their usual, excellent job of providing historic flash and collectibles to swoon over. I was especially pleased to run into several artists that I have talked to on the phone but never had the pleasure of meeting in person,

like Joe Vegas impersonator Lucky Bastard and Dave Singletary from Sacred Art Tattoo in Chico. I thanked the crew from Spider Murphy's for the poster they sent me at Christmas and dispersed my very best hugs to author and



SUNNY



artist Chi Chi, Mr. G, rock solid Marc and the swash-buckling Ferenc from Triangle Tattoo in Ft. Bragg. That's the great thing about going to these conventions, I run into old friends, like R.J. and Dottie from Tabu Tattoo in West L.A., as well as stalwarts I don't see very often like Frank Ball from Tattoomania in L.A. and the charismatic man himself, Gill "the Drill" Montie (with his beautiful, effervescent fiancée, Angie). I met local character Mr. T

GILL "THE DRILL" S' hand



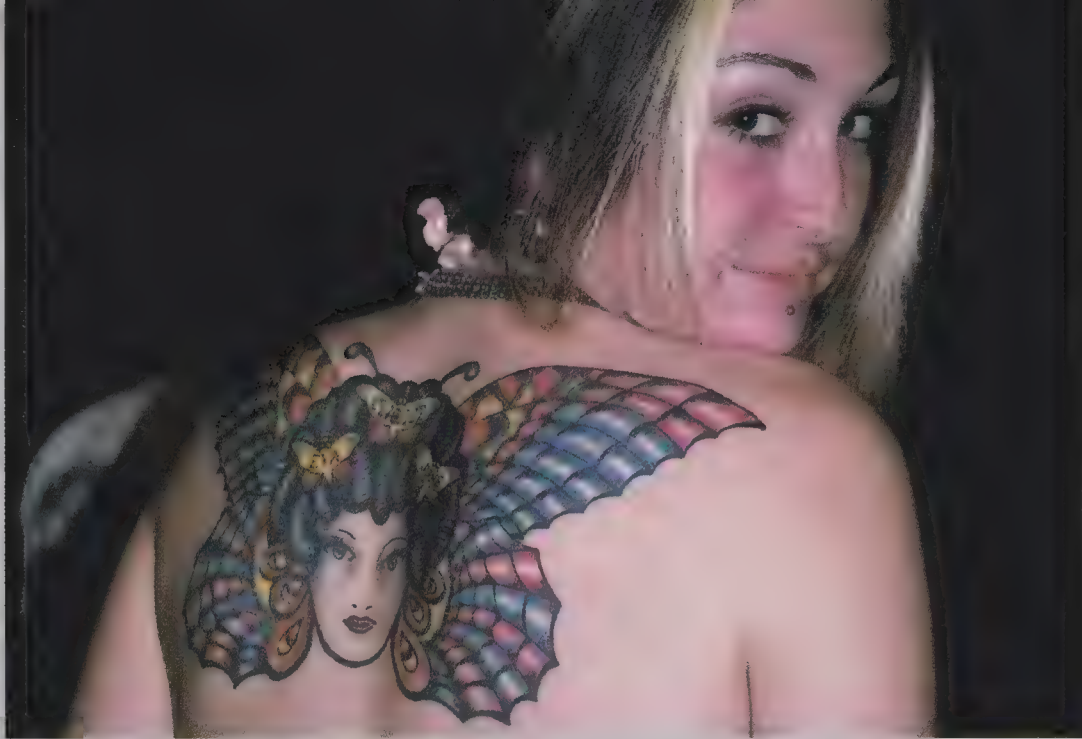
hello, and even ran into the vivacious lady Marie who sported a special tattoo I had heard about but never seen. Philadelphia Eddy told me about it some months ago. It's Skebo's famous groin-area tattoo of the Pink Panther mowing Marie's pubic hair with a lawn mower. It was a thrill and a delight to experience this rare artistic treasure.

Besides the friendliness of the crowd, I loved meeting Bert's beautiful daughter Lisa (wink-wink, nudge-nudge),

RICHARD, tattoo by Mike



AMBER,
tattoo by
Dick
Goldman



the radiant Sunny Buick from Goldfield's, guest artist Horishow from Japan, dear friend Masato (also visiting from the Land of the Rising Sun), and, best of all, I loved watching our own Joe Vegas, asleep for three hours on the overstuffed couch right in the middle of the lobby. With his hands neatly folded in his lap, he was both an angelic vision and inspiration to us all. In his defense, Mr. Vegas was recuperating from a 14-hour tattoo session with iron-

fisted Running Bear, so the mellow vibes and comfortable surroundings at Tattoos & Blues were the perfect medicine for such a weary traveler on the treacherous road of life.

Yes, Joe, when a friendly smile and lots of good food were required, Tattoos & Blues turned out to be the perfect oasis in an otherwise inhospitable world. Thanks, Bert. We'll be back. ■

BERT and beautiful LISA



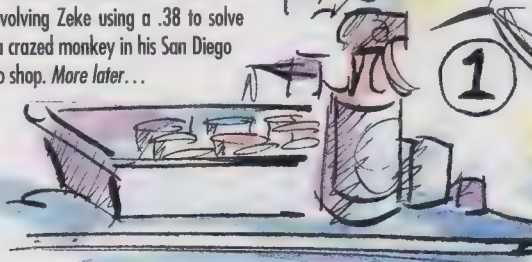
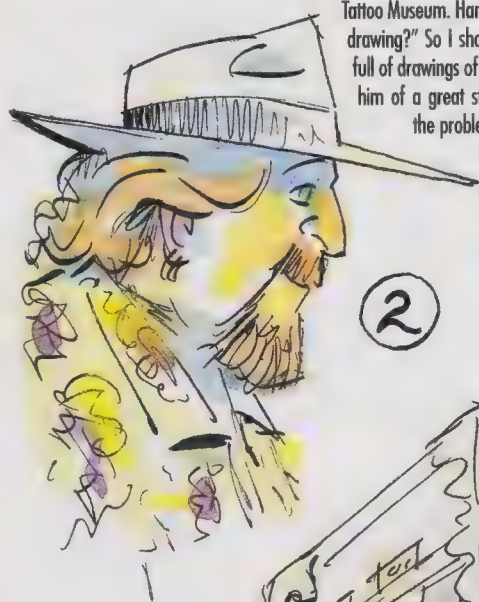
ROBERT, tattoo by Sleepy-G



LITZ' Sketchbook

HANKY PANKY at Tattoo Tour San Francisco

- ① Friday, stopped by Hanky Panky's booth, and there was Henk Schiffmacher himself, hard at work, as always. One of the most exuberant artists in the tattoo biz, I never saw Hanky in the booth without a client.
- ② All work and no play makes Hanky a dull boy. But never fear, Hanky Panky always has time for a party. Spotted him Saturday evening, heading for the nightlife. Puffing on a fine cigar, Hanky wore a really fine Panama hat that was later removed for balancing a chair on his head.
- ③ On Sunday, the last day, the celebration slowed down. I stopped by Hanky's booth to introduce myself and to get a look at one of C.W. Eldridge's exquisitely crafted, portable circus tattooing trunks that Henk was taking back to exhibit at his Amsterdam Tattoo Museum. Hanky asked me, "What have you been drawing?" So I showed him my sketchbook, which was full of drawings of the Tour. A sketch of Zeke Owen reminded him of a great story involving Zeke using a .38 to solve the problem of a crazed monkey in his San Diego tattoo shop. More later...



BIKE COURIERS

DAVE MAYE, SNAKE HANDLER AND PYRO-TECH FOR THE ALICE COOPER TRIBUTE BAND THAT PLAYED AT MIDNIGHT ON HALLOWEEN (SKULL TATTOO BY BUBU, SAN FRANCISCO)



SKIN & INK VISITS THE HALLOWEEN ALLEY CAT BIKE COURIER CHALLENGE by Joleen Y. Marlow

TATTOOED

"It's kind of a documentation of a time in your life. And, when it's done, you can't change that. You keep adding things along the way, but you always have this record and you carry it with you."

—Jay Scott
Promoter, Halloween Alley Cat Bike Courier Challenge

It was Halloween weekend, my bags were over-packed, and the plane was revving up its engines. *Did I bring enough rain gear?* My mind tends to go through security checks even though it's too late to do anything about it. I was bound for Vancouver, Canada. The Dunhill cigarette people were putting on a Halloween Alley Cat Bike Courier Challenge that was supposed to include a group of tattooed and pierced bicycle freaks. It sounded like a possible article, and the editor called to see if I wanted to be the official SKIN & INK reporter. If I said yes, Bat Cave productions promised to send me a plane ticket and a place to stay. So I agreed.

At the border, I remembered that Canada is another country. It brought back memories from several years ago when I was crossing the Canadian border by car, in the early 1990s, and forgot that I had a loaded handgun. Let me explain: It was one of those rickety pistols that you throw in the backseat and forget. Canadian customs wasn't very understanding, however, and they made me pay a fine. They confiscated the weapon, plus a few other items of contraband, and sent me on my way into the land of the maple leaf.

I look quite a bit more respectable these days, so I had no trouble making it across the border. A nice representative from Sacred Heart Tattoo was there at the airport to greet and escort me to the Atrium Inn, where I'd be staying. The next day, I made my way to the warehouse district where the bicycle race was taking place.

The track was a giant bi-level, wooden structure that filled up the main floor space of an enormous, cavernous building. Bicycle couriers from various points on the globe were queuing up in an orderly fashion to take turns on the figure-eight track. Keeping a clear focus on what my editor had said about "keeping to subjects that would interest SKIN & INK readers," I was on the lookout for tattooed freaks, but all I saw were mild-mannered bike couriers. Every one of them was covered from head to toe in long-sleeved shirts, full-length bicycle pants and every sort of protective gear you can imagine. The design of the track featured curves capable of removing several layers of skin, if you hit the boards at speed. The theory was, I suppose, that any exposed ink work would be erased in a split second by such violent contact with the track. At this point, it was clearly stretching it to try and relate this event to tattooing. I quietly began to panic.

The organizers of the event, Andrew Turner and Jay Scott, assured me that there were plenty of people on site that had tattoos. *Okay*, I thought. *Now all I have to do to take the pictures and get a story is to force a lot of polite bike couriers to remove their clothing.* Thank goodness the event included free beer for members of the press! In fact, the savvy organizers managed to make the event go incredibly smooth. Each night, a lineup of live bands played on two different stages. Overall, it was a lively festival atmosphere that attracted a mellow group of competitors and onlookers alike. I was amazed that such a large contingent managed to remain civilized throughout the three days of intense bike racing action. I don't remember seeing any fights or trouble of any kind, even after the local Vancouver bicycle police beat the couriers in the first race. And, finally, after things got going, plenty of peculiar tattooed people began to show up and take part. The following diary tells the story, a picture at a time:



**Graham (CRYING HEART TATTOO
 BY DAEMON ROWANCHILDE, URBAN
 PRIMITIVE, TORONTO)**





Sean (LOWER LEG TATTOO BY
DAEMON ROWANCHILDE,
URBAN PRIMITIVE, TORONTO)



Tequila Goggle Boy.

"MY STRATEGY WAS NOT TO LET ANYBODY PASS ME. IF THEY TRIED TO PASS ME, I'D MOVE OVER TO CUT THEM OFF, SO THEY'D HAVE TO HIT THE BRAKES OR CRASH. FOR THE GUY BEHIND YOU, IT'S BAD. THE GUY WHO REAR-ENDS YOU WILL PROBABLY GO DOWN, BUT YOU CAN STAY UP. BUT THIS GUY [THE FINAL OVERALL WINNER OF THE RACE, DIRK DIJKHUIS] WENT BY ME LIKE NOTHING. HE DID IT AT THE TOP OF THE CORNER. HE'S GOT INCREDIBLE CONTROL AND HANDLING CAPABILITIES. THAT GUY IS CRAZY! WHEN WE WERE AT THE STARTING LINE, HE TOLD ME HE HAD WON THE AMS-TERDAM ALLEY CAT RACE. THEY HAD TO SWIM OUT TO A BOAT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RACE, AND THEY GAVE THEM A SHOT OF TEQUILA. AND THEN HE HAD TO RETURN TO WHERE THEY STARTED. THEY ALMOST DROWNED, BECAUSE THE TEQUILA HIT WHEN THEY WERE SWIMMING BACK."

TATTOOED BIKE COURIERS



THE GIANT BI-LEVEL, INDOOR WOODEN TRACK



Richie Red, BIKE COURIER
FROM SAN FRANCISCO (TAT-
TOOED INITIALS)

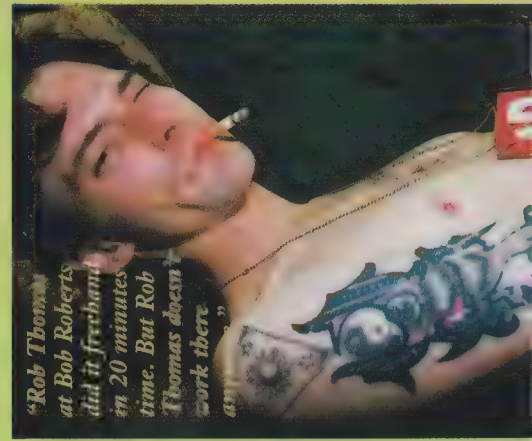


Terri (DRAGON TATTOO BY
ED, LIQUID SILVER TATTOO)

TATTOOED BIKE COURIERS



Jayson (HAND SCORPION BY MIKE GIBSON, WRIST BY KIRT WISCOMBE)



"Rob Thomas at Bob Roberts did it firsthand in 20 minutes. But Rob Thomas doesn't work there any more."



TATTOOED BIKE CO



THE BAND Muscle Bitches
(THE MASTERS OF TONGUE IN CHEEK)

Shauna T. Heida

(HERON PRINT TATTOO) "GETTING A TATTOO WAS ONE OF THOSE THINGS I ALWAYS WANTED TO DO, SO I DID IT AS A BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO MYSELF. IT HAS TO DO WITH MY LIFE AND WHAT I'VE GONE THROUGH. IT REPRESENTS STRENGTH, STAMINA AND PATIENCE. AN OLD NATIVE LEGEND TELLS THAT THE YOUNG MEN WERE INSPIRED BY WATCHING THE HERON AS IT WAITS FOR ITS FOOD. IT HAS THE PATIENCE AND STAMINA TO STAND IN COLD WATER. IT'S ALL ABOUT OUTER AND INNER STRENGTH."



MY ASSISTANT Mara,
THE ICE QUEEN

COURIERS



Benjamin Thompson FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO BIKE MESSENGERS ASSOCIATION. "GRAVY DOG" TATTOO BY JESSIE (SAN FRANCISCO). "IN SAN FRANCISCO EVERYBODY WORKS ON COMMISSION, AND THERE ARE JOBS AND TAGS THAT PAY LOW, AND TAGS THAT PAY REALLY HIGH. THE ONES THAT PAY HIGH ARE CALLED 'GRAVY.' AND, IF YOU GET A LOT OF GRAVY, YOU'RE THE GRAVY DOG. YOU KNOW, IT'S LIKE, GIVE ME THE GRAVY."

Roy
(TATTOO BY MIRELLA)

THANK GOD IN HEAVEN THAT
A NURSE WAS ON HAND TO
DELIVER THIS BEAUTIFUL CHILD



Corinna Klein (TRIBAL WITH FLOWERS TATTOO BY JAY, REST OF HALF-SLEEVE AND LEG DRAGON BY MIKE GIBSON)



Alex
(SKULL TATTOO BY BUBU, SAN FRANCISCO)



Johnny Jet Fuel,
WHO CAN PUT A GIANT WOODEN TRACK TOGETHER, CAN ALSO COOK A MEAL FOR 30 STARVED BIKE COURIERS AND MAKE A MEAN CUP OF CAPPUCCINO AT THE SAME TIME. HE'S THE PERFECT WIFE!



Blair FROM D.S.K., A BAND PERFORMING AT THE EVENT

TATTOOED BIKE COURIERS



Jay Scott, ONE OF THE MAIN ORGANIZERS OF THE EVENT.

"AS HUMANS, WE HAVE A PERSPECTIVE THAT WE ARE COMPLETELY FREE INDIVIDUALS AND WE CAN DO WHAT WE WANT. IN SUCH A LARGE WAY, WE'RE BIOLOGICAL MACHINES AND GENETICALLY PREPROGRAMMED IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS THAT WE'RE NOT EVEN AWARE WHERE THAT PROGRAMMING COMES FROM. YOU LOOK BACK AT THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE AND WHY YOU REACTED IN A CERTAIN MANNER, AND REALIZE THAT THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS THAT YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER, DESPITE WHAT YOU THINK. YOU REACT INSTINCTIVELY, BECAUSE THAT'S THE RANGE OF SITUATIONS THAT YOUR BODY ALLOWS YOU TO REACT TO. SO, THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE TATTOO IS A SORT OF LIGHT STAMP OVER THIS BIOLOGICAL MACHINE THAT YOU CAN'T OTHERWISE CONTROL."

NO EVENT WOULD
BE COMPLETE
WITHOUT THE
COPS



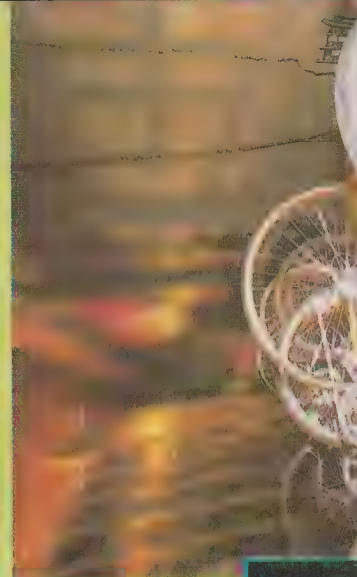
TATTOOED BIKE GO

QUICK AS A WINK, THESE
AUTHENTIC CANADIAN
HOCKEY PLAYERS
SURROUNDED THE
ICE QUEEN AND FORCED
HER TO COMPROMISE



TATTOOED BIKE COURIER FROM MINNEAPOLIS.

"MY BLACK PANTHER? THERE WERE SIX OF US HOWLIES LIVING ON THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII. WE ALL GOT THE SAME TATTOO, BECAUSE IT BONDED US TOGETHER. YOU SEE, YOU'VE GOT TO STICK TOGETHER IN HAWAII. WE WANTED THE NATIVE ISLANDERS TO SEE THAT WE WERE TOGETHER."



URRIERS



Leah McGuinness
(ANGEL TATTOO
BY JASON
BALODIS)



Melissa Persons (BUD-
DHA TIGER TATTOO BY ELECTRIC
ED, ST. LOUIS. SHIVA BY
DEBORAH VALENTINE, NULLA,
SAN FRANCISCO)



**BAND MEMBER
CLUTCHING LIVE SNAKE**



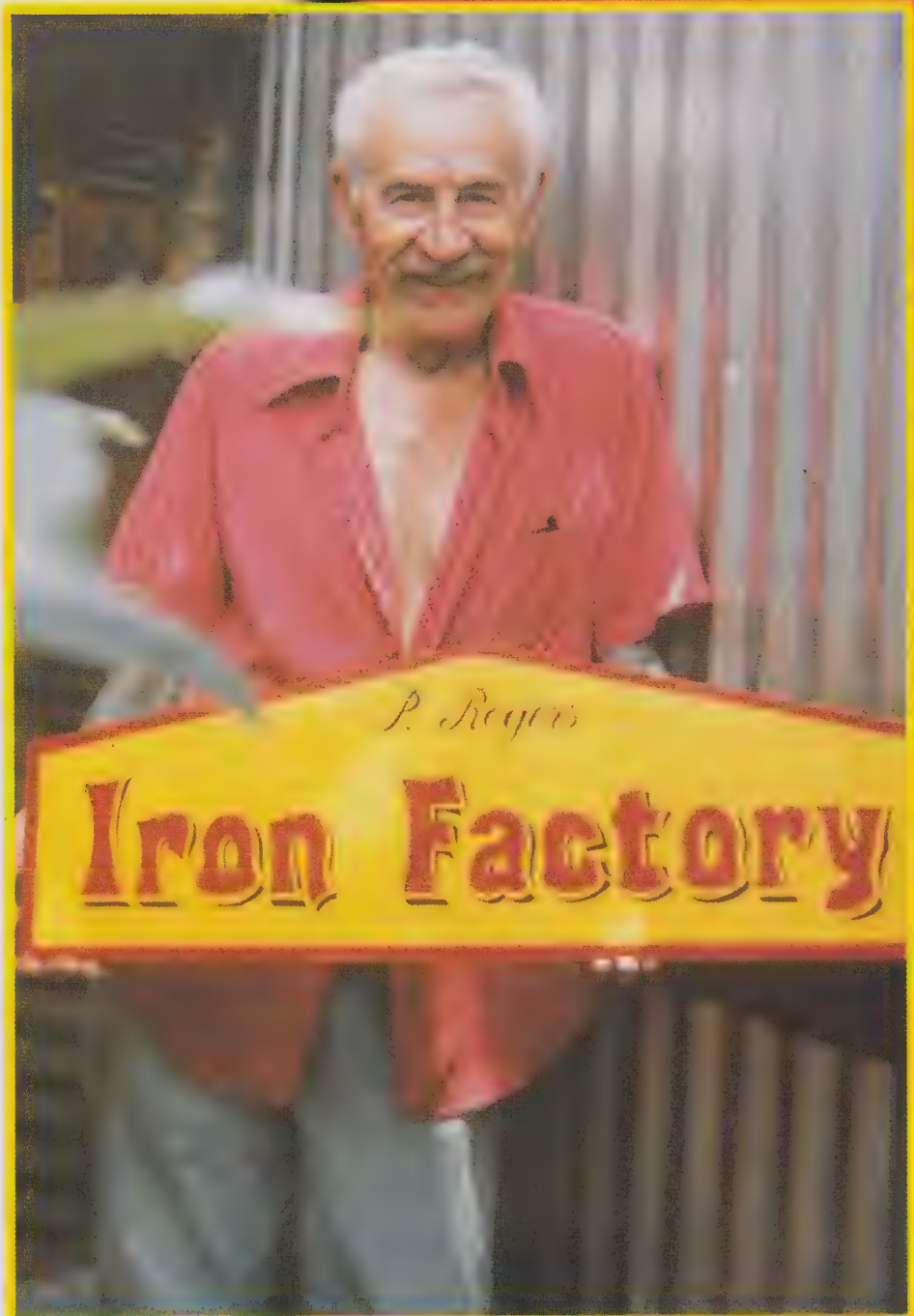
LET THE RACE BEGIN!

OUR LIVING HISTORY

by **C. W. Eldridge**

The 1960s found Paul Rogers and his wife Helen settling into their new trailer home on Shelter Avenue in Jacksonville, Florida. Paul had been working in Jacksonville for several years with Bill Williamson. When Bill died in 1964, Paul took over the shop. After a run-in with some local tough guys around 1970, Paul started working at home. Paul and Helen and that little trailer saw an endless stream of visitors. It was there that Paul could spend more time with the machine work that he loved so much. Paul had longtime tattoo customers whom he tattooed at his trailer as well as many of the visiting masses who would want to take home a tattoo from "Pop." But his machine work took center stage as he spent countless hours in that little 12 by 12 tin shed, affectionately dubbed the "Iron Factory." The name "Iron Factory" came about because Paul referred to his un-stylish, but dependable, machines as "irons." These irons went into the hands of some of the best tattooists of the era, and, today, only seven years after his death, Paul's machine handiwork commands some of the highest prices in the business.

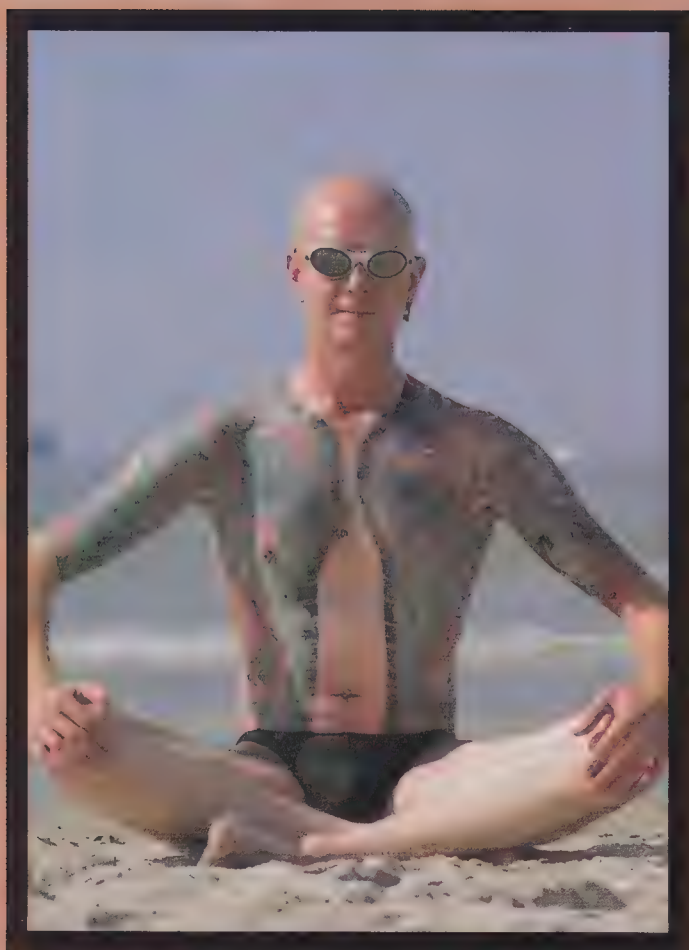
The Iron Factory was a portable building set on the side of Paul's lot on Shelter Avenue. It was so filled with work benches that there was really no place to sit down. Paul kept a couple wooden stools around but mostly for visitors. He would spend most of his working hours standing at those work benches building his legendary machines with hand tools. The only power tools I remember seeing were a drill press and a grinder. Machine heads from around the world would gather at that small shed and hang on every word as they watched Paul build his machines, hoping to absorb some of his wisdom. The Iron Factory sign seen in this article was painted and presented to Paul by Tom and Juli Beasley in 1981. ■



PAUL ROGERS

(1905-1990)

©Tattoo Archive 1998



EUROPE'S BEST KEPT SECRET

Deep Inside the Belgian
Tattoo Scene

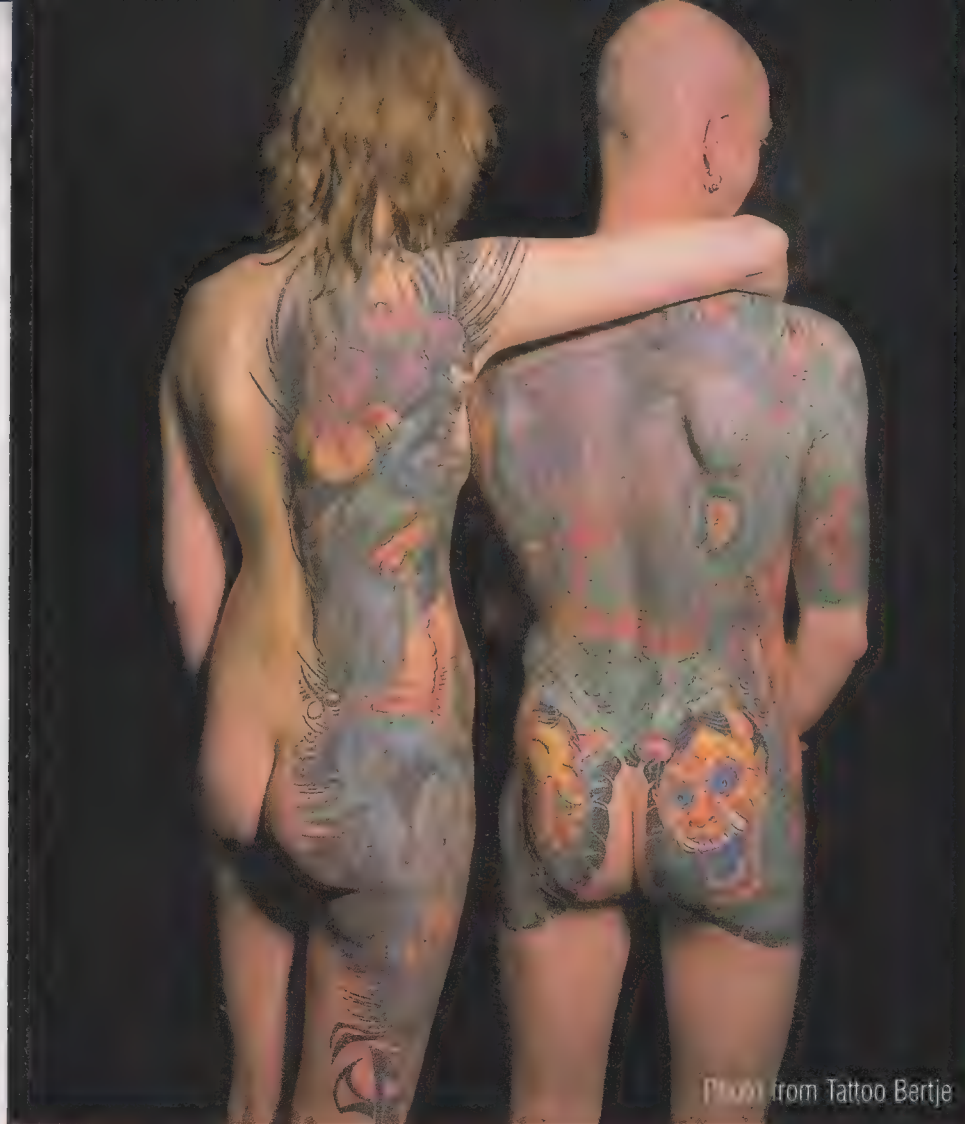
By Rik van Boeckel
Photography by Rob Webster

As a writer about the tattoo scene in the Netherlands, it was not a big step to do the same in Belgium. From Amsterdam, it's only a two hour drive to the capital, Brussels. The only problem is that I don't know which language to speak: Dutch or French? Belgium is bilingual, and some tattoo artists in Brussels speak only French. But Brussels is a truly European city, and there you can find the headquarters of the European Parliament, so, if need be, I can also try it in English.

While visiting the Tattoo and Piercing Expo in Brussels the last weekend of April, I found out that speaking Dutch, French or English is enough. Because I am a hard worker, I only spent two days in Brussels (the length of the convention). I went home on the train. In the amount of time it took me to travel to my home, I could have been in Oostende or in the Ardennes. I could have written this article in a hotel on the North Seacoast in Oostende, for example, looking out of the window at boats coming in from or going out to Dover, England. Or in a country house in the Ardennes, which are east of Belgium near the borders of Germany and Luxemburg. You can find rest and silence there after visiting Belgian tattoo shops. If you are in a hurry, you can do this tattoo trip in two or three days. Belgium is so small, and most of the shops are located in and around the big cities of Brussels, Antwerp, Gent, Brugge, Luik and Oostende. And, if you want to see something of the cities, you can do it in a week. In case you like old European towns, you will especially enjoy Brugge and Antwerp. The hotels are good, and there are enough places for budget travelers. Don't forget to try the Belgian beer—it's really special. If only for the beer, Belgium is worth visiting. Duvel (Flemish for devil) and Hoegaarden are the best brands. After three or four glasses, you're really tipsy.

FAMILY BUSINESS

In the harbor of Antwerp, you will find some old tattoo artists from the time when only sailors got tattoos. Just near the old center of the university in the Flemish town of Brugge, you will find the shop of John Artliner, organizer of the Artline Tattoo Expo in Brugge. When I visited this convention in November of 1996, I met Marlene from Rhode Island, USA. She was on her way to Amsterdam with a friend. She wanted to see Hanky Panky's Tattoo Museum there and, in Brugge, she stepped out of the train to show us the tattoo of black-and-white orchids on her back (tattooed by her fiancé Philippe Girard). She was one of the participants of the contest. I really liked her tattoo. It looked more like a drawing than a tattoo. Marlene didn't win a prize, but she got positive comments from many people. She is also the mother of three children, but I really don't know how an ordinary mother from Belgium would



“The Belgian master of Japanese-style tattoos doesn’t live in Brussels but in Oostende.”



who worked in Artliner’s tattoo shop. He himself has 137 piercings. You can find him in the *Guinness Book of Records* as, “the Most Pierced Man in the World.” His nickname is “the Prince of Piercings.”

Instead of becoming John’s partner, he started another shop in Charleroi, in the French-speaking part of the country. Meanwhile both expos had two successful editions. The Tattoo and Piercing Expo in Brussels has become big, but this first one was rather relaxed. There were no band or erotic shows like in Brugge. “I don’t want them,” Lambrechts said. “That way all the attention is on the tattoo artists and the piercers. I don’t want to lure people with things that have nothing to do with tattooing.”

An admirable sentiment, but, quite honestly, I feel that there was not much for the audience to enjoy. Only looking at the work of tattoo artists and piercers is not enough.

POPULARITY

“Tattooing and piercing is becoming very popular in Belgium. Young people want tattoos as well as piercings. So I invented a new category for the contest,” Lambrechts said proudly. “Besides a prize for the best piercing and one for the best pierced tattoo, we give a prize for the best combination of piercing and tattoo (for

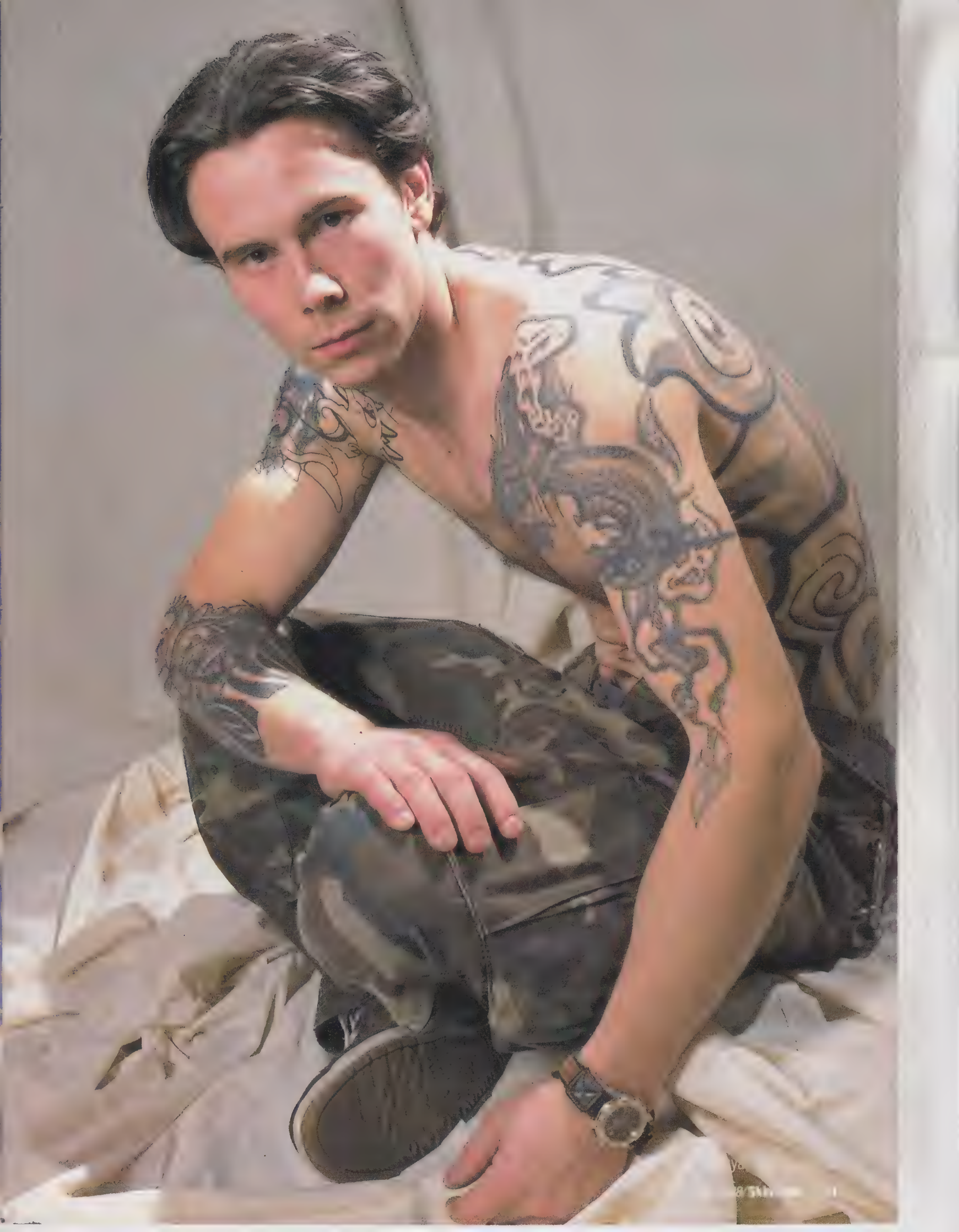
react to having such a tattoo. The Belgians are, in a way, more conservative than the Dutch, but, in another way, they are more vivid and kind-hearted. It’s also possible to find a mother in Belgium whose husband is a tattoo artist. Sometimes it’s a family business. For example, in the case of Tattoo Bertje from Oostende, his daughter Miranda is an artist. They represent two generations (50 and 20 years of age, respectively) of tattoo artists from one family.

And it goes further, because Bertje’s grandfather was also a tattoo artist. Bertje is the uncle of John Artliner who learned the art of tattooing from him. The clients are of all ages from 20 to 70. A tattoo artist from Essen (between Antwerp and the Dutch border) called “the Needle Doctor,” told me that he tattooed a man of 70. His wife had recently died, and, since she never agreed about his wish to get tattooed, he now took this chance, the old devil.

CHANGES

Let’s go back now to the first time I met a Belgian tattoo artist. He came from Antwerp. I met him a couple of years ago at a small, Dutch convention in Roosendaal, not far from the Belgian border. I was curious about how the tattoo scene would be across the border. He told me that there aren’t many good artists in Belgium, and that the developments are much slower than in Holland and the USA. He was looking for information in Holland because there was not much of an exchange of ideas where he came from. There were no conventions in Belgium. Meanwhile, some things have changed. A year later, John Artliner from Brugge started the first Artline Tattoo Expo.

“I talked a lot with him about starting a convention in our country,” said Alexander Lambrechts, the organizer of the first Tattoo and Piercing Expo in Brussels. Lambrechts is a piercer



“Young people want tattoos as well as piercings. So I invented a new category for the contest.”

example, a pierced navel with a tattoo around it!”

At the Brussel's Expo, I saw a lot of piercers. In Brugge they are not as prominent. “It's an informal tattoo gathering,” John Artliner empha-

sized. “I want to bring the art of tattooing closer to the ordinary people. I want them to see that it is art and not kitsch.”

In contrast with Lambrechts, Artliner attaches an important role to entertainment. “The people want to be amused,” is his opinion. “For example, the erotic shows can stimulate people to take off their shirts and pants, and show each other their tattoos.”

Alas, the Belgians are a bit timid. Most of the tattoos are exhibited only during the contests. Brugge and Brussels are, in that way, different from Amsterdam. There, it was constantly show time. Belgian tattoos are based on tribal, “biomechanical” and Japanese themes. The wandering artist Oogie Boogie Munpie from Brussels designs excellent tribals in Maori style. John Artliner calls himself an all-around artist, yet, he prefers tribals from Borneo and also Celtic designs. “With Celtic tattoos, you can prove to be a specialist,” he said.

In Lambrechts' opinion, Celtic tat-

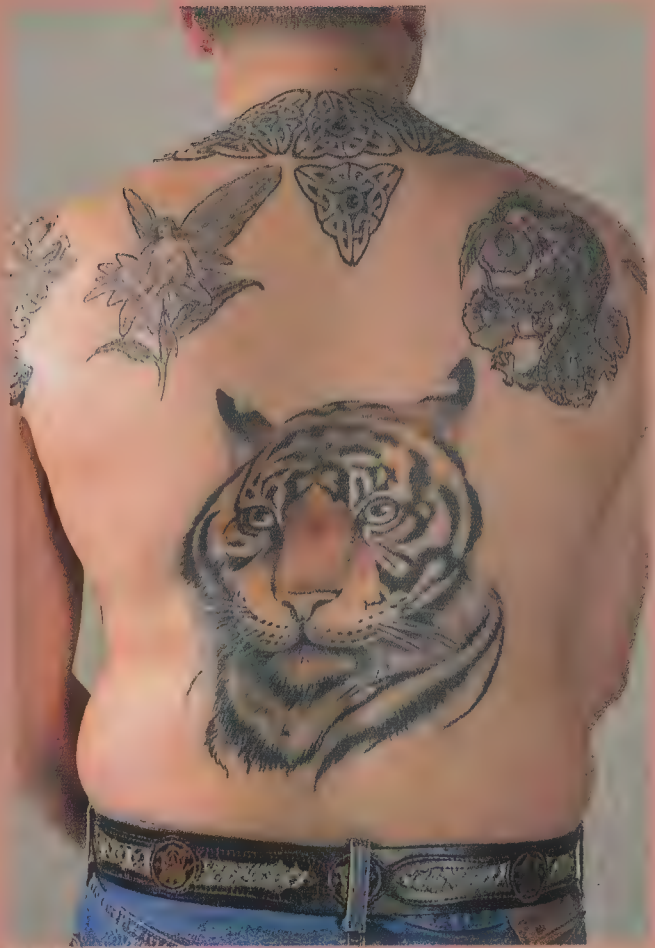
toos are also tribals. To anticipate confusion, you cannot find a competition for the best tribal tattoo at the Brussels Expo. No, he calls it the best *ornamental*. More appropriate, he thought.

BIOMECHANICS

Rock Side Tattoo Eddy lives in nearby Leuven, which, just like Brugge, is an old university town. In Belgium, and also in other countries, he is a well-known specialist in *biomechanics*. The Swiss artist Giger (his designs were used for the movie *Alien*) is a source of inspiration for him. Eddy makes fine combinations of colors in a style that is rather aggressive and lugubrious with all of those images of aliens, skulls and monsters. In Eddy's shop, statues of aliens and also American Indians are conspicuously displayed.

Rock Side Tattoo Eddy is also a painter. Inspired by the art of painting, he started with tattooing. He said, “My opinion is that tattooing differs little from the way a painter works. You can use techniques like





SMITHSONIAN

ILLUSTRATION



working with solid line structures or create flowing movements. But to tattoo special effects or shadows on the skin is something completely different. You cannot compare it with oil painting or painting of watercolors, but it's still important that you incorporate basic painting techniques. It helps with tattooing... it allows you to step forward."

John Artliner said, "Tattooing is like drawing or painting on skin. The

creasing popularity of tattooing in our country, a lot of the efforts to get tattooing out of the mainstream seem futile. The good artists have to make

"The level of tattooing in Belgium has improved in the last two years, but there are also a lot of bad tattooists."



Photo from Tattoo Bertje

skin is the most beautiful canvas there is because it is real, it's alive!"

Artliner makes a distinction between tattooists and tattoo artists. "A tattoo artist makes a tattoo come alive, because he has vision and technique. At the moment, there are too many tattooists in Belgium, and the quality decreases. Because of the in-

a lot of cover-ups soon after, because of all of those bad tattoos. At the moment, it's really getting out of hand. You can't control it anymore. A lot of people start to tattoo only because of the money. It happens a lot now in

small places like pubs. Let's face it, a pub is really not an appropriate place to get a tattoo."

When I asked John about the prices of tattoos in Belgium he said, "I'm cheaper than the other artists. For a small tattoo, I ask about 2,000 Belgian francs (about \$50), and, for a big one, 12,000 francs (\$300). Making a backpiece, I charge by the hour. For black-and-white, 2,500 francs (\$62). Color costs 3,500 francs for an hour (\$88).

JAPANESE MASKS

A different tattoo artist is Shad, a young lad from Brussels. Like Rock Side Tattoo Eddy, he was a student at the art academy. Shad's shop, Hannya Tattoo, carries the name of a Japanese goddess. He makes backpieces inspired by Japanese masks from the Noh Theatre. I saw a big one at the expo in Brugge.

"I don't copy," Shad told me. "I work freehand from examples that I have painted on the wall. I draw the design directly on the body of the customer, so he or she can see if they want it like that. That's better than first drawing it on a paper."

Before he started to tattoo, Shad was a graffiti and airbrush artist. "With graffiti, I learned to make big paintings like I do now with those backpieces. Because of my airbrush experience, I am able to tattoo without lines and with more depth."

Shad likes it when the tattoos are

FERNAND, Rusty Jef

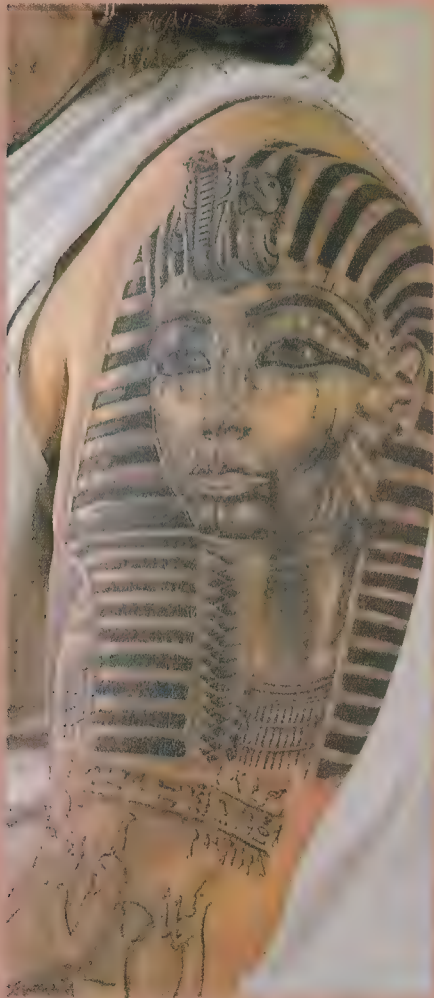


Photo from Tattoo Bertje

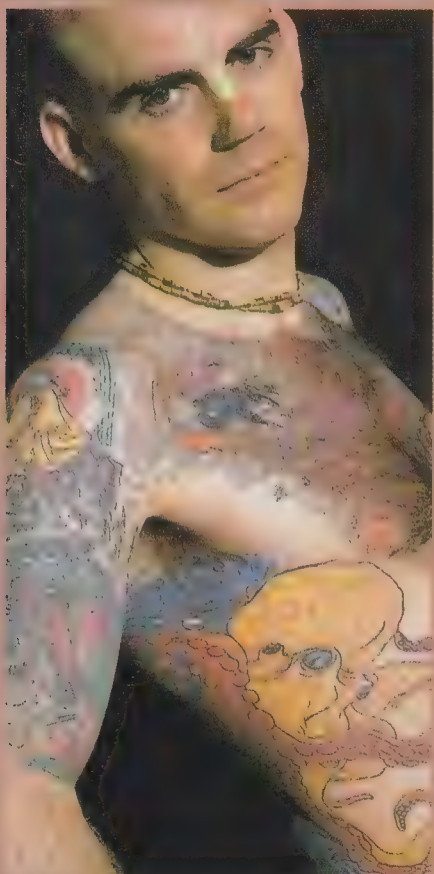
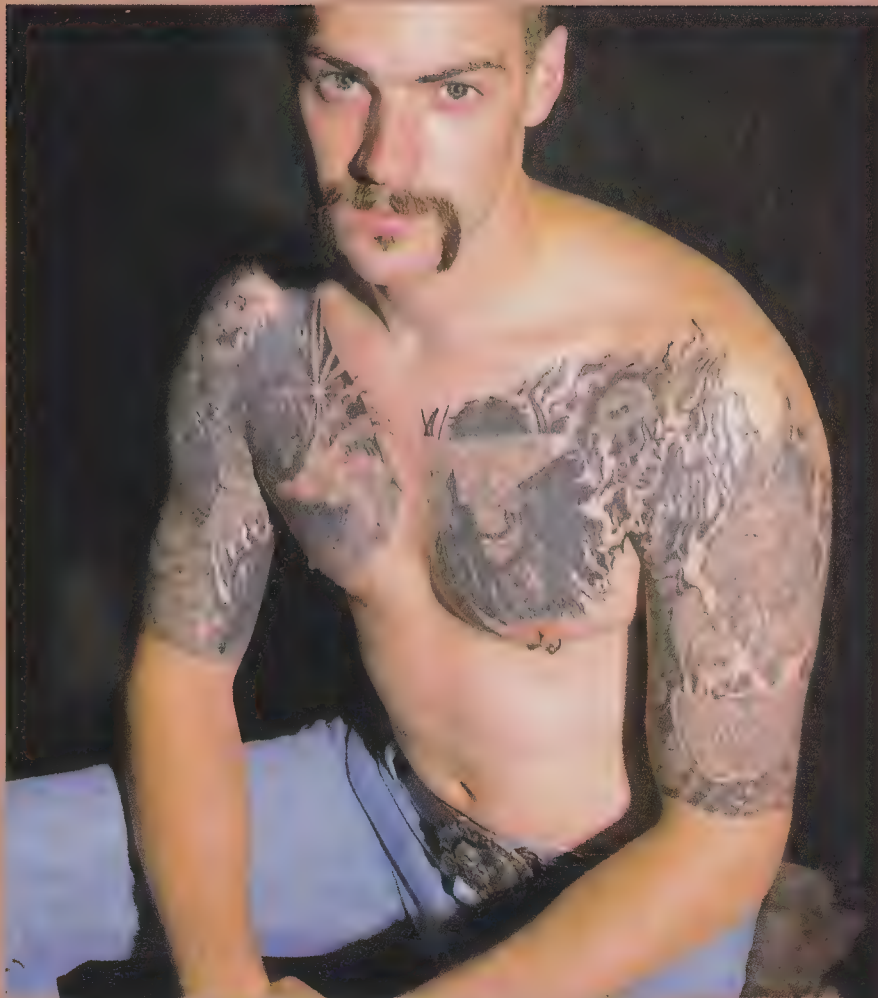


Photo from Tattoo Bertje



CLAIRE, D-Bil Tattoo



Tattoo by Shad Hannya, Hannya Tattoo



“Don't forget to try the Belgian beer—it's really special.”

unified. “I don't like a jumble of different tattoos. I prefer the Japanese style in which the whole body is one tattoo. Those tattoos are timeless.”

MASTER

However, the Belgian master of Japanese-style tattoos doesn't live in Brussels but in Oostende. I mentioned him already before: Tattoo Bertje. Bertje has customers from all over Europe, even from Russia. For 30 years he has worked as a tattoo artist. He is also an accomplished

painter, sculptor, graphic artist and designer of tattoo equipment. “Painting and tattooing, for me, they are equal. Both are forms of art,” he said.

I had the honor of visiting Tattoo Bertje in his well-appointed shop in the center of Oostende, not far from the sea and the harbor. Japanese decorations give the place a special atmosphere. Music of the New Age musician Kitaro (also from Japan) and Bertje's Japanese-style clothing complete the image. His own master was Mytsuhaka Johada, who taught him to work with bamboo sticks.

“Since 1700, the artists in Japan have worked like that. I use their motives in a modern way,” he said.

When you see a tattoo made by Bertje, it looks often like a painting put on the skin. “Painting inspires

John Artliner





me," he said. "When I have made a painting, you can see the influence of the design and colors in the tattoos I create during the same period."

Bertje gathered much of his skill at the art academy. "Every tattoo artist has to follow the art academy. A true artist has to study things like drawing, painting, sculpture, and also dermatology and psychology in order to learn more about the body, the skin and the mind of man."

Bertje shares John Artliner's opinion that there are too many tattooists in Belgium. According to him, the profession of tattooing has to be protected.

"The level of tattooing in Belgium has improved in the last two years, but there are also a lot of bad tattooists. Only a few artists know how to work with modern techniques. Also the hygiene can be improved. It is a serious problem that has to be seriously tackled."

Tattoo Bertje thinks that there are too many conventions nowadays. "A convention is good to show the audience what is possible in tattoo art and what the modern styles are. On the other hand, conventions often stimulate unskilled people to become tattooists themselves. Too many of them decide to learn the profession. If you learn incorrectly, you make mistakes, and that's out of question. A tattoo has to be applied properly in one time. Not everybody is good for that, even if a person can draw very well. If you have a hundred tattooists, only one of them is good."

Bertje wants to convince the Belgian government to accept the art of tattooing as a real form of art. Maybe by his efforts, tattooing will be taught properly at the art academy.

"If Salvador Dali or another great artist would have used a tattoo machine, the critics would have called it art, because they are big names. But the opposite is true if you merely graduate from the art academy, and, afterwards, you start to tattoo. The so-called 'authorities' don't see it as art. That's not right."

Bertje and John Artliner's concern about the level of tattooing in Belgium has, of course, a lot to do with the fact that they see tattooing as fine art. Others have only commercial reasons to become tattooists. But everyone has to begin somewhere. If they don't have enough money to start a shop, the only place where they can tattoo is a room in their

house like Bertje, who started in the harbor district of Antwerp.

At the moment, it's obvious that there is no balance anymore between quality and popularity. "Again, I had to cover a lot of bad tattoos this week," John Artliner told me during a telephone call, recently. That's a pity. The tattoo scene in Belgium is growing, but it goes too fast. And, quite simply, that's not good for the artists or the people who get the bad tattoos. My hope is that, after awhile, quality will win out over quantity. A positive sign is the fact that, at the convention in Roosendaal, tattoos made by Bertje won a lot of prizes. I was encouraged but really not surprised. ■



Tattoo by Shad Hannya, Hannya Tattoo

Have you got a question for the sagacious Mr. Owen?

Ask ZEKE

Write him at Zeke, c/o SKIN & INK, P.O. Box 1069, Pasadena, CA 91102

Dear Zeke:

What do you know about the care and feeding of tattoo machines?

—Raul Zinzian
Panama City, Panama

Well Raul, I know quite a bit and I wish that I was handed specifically half-a-dozen or a dozen different questions rather than trying to go over the whole thing. That could waste a lot of everybody's time; going over a lot of stuff that they already know, don't want to read about or whatever. But I would assume that you're already involved in tattooing. I'll tell you what; if I were in Panama City, I'd have three machines: one machine in each hand and one up my butt. I'd be doing flips all over the place. I'd be so happy. But anyway, the most important thing about the tattoo machine is having penetration. In other words, you've got to get through into the layer of skin, the continual living layer of skin, so that the pigment, the ink, is down there under the top layer that dies and replaces itself. That's pretty obvious. That's what you want to get your machine to do and you don't want to damage the skin while you're at it. So that's what you want to work for when you adjust your machine. Basically, it's a trial and error thing.

Most of the machines that are purchased through mail-order are put together by the guy who owns the supply company, and he probably is a tattoo artist of some kind himself. He is generally the result of a chain of other tattoo artists before him that have adjusted their machines in a similar fashion. As a general rule, I have found that about two out of ten people who buy machines from tattoo suppliers are dissatisfied with them. I get phone calls or an occasional fax or letter saying, "I can't use the machine from this guy who you recommended because of the way that it is adjusted now." So, when you get a machine through the mail from one of the suppliers that somehow doesn't work right for you—for example—it seems to be too slow, the stroke is too long, the stroke is too short, it sprays ink all over the place, the needle bar seems to be loose, you don't know

whether to apply more power or less power, you want to bend the back spring up and the front spring down, you want to cut off the front spring and move the contact screw back, you want to put in a capacitor, you want to take it off... well, now you're beginning to see what I mean. There's probably a minimum of 25 different things you can do to your tattoo machine to make it work for you and fit the way you use it. I suppose that's what you refer to when you say "care and feeding" of the tattoo machine, because "care and feeding" to me means that my machine is running good and I want to keep it running good. I think what you're trying to ask, Raul, is how do you make your machine run well and continue running well from the beginning? Well, then again, the other side of it is that you may have one that worked well when you got it, and it doesn't work well anymore, and you want to know what to do now. It's really difficult to answer this question.

I would suggest that you call me at my studio and invite me down to Panama for a couple of months. I hope you're near the beach. And we can sit down and talk about it. I'll bring some spring stocks, cutters, hole punchers, files, coils and the lot. We could put on a few tattoos at night. That would be helpful, before we go to the bar after. But, anyway, you have a choice. If your machine ran well when you got it, and you burnt the tip of the spring off by using it so much—which I hope you did if you're busy—that sounds good. Busy is experience. Send it back to where you got it, let them do it for you. Keep on grinding away. If you want to do it by yourself, then you're going to have to sit down with somebody and take it

one step at a time. That's the way you tune a racing motorcycle, I guess. That's the way we used to do it, we'd make a change in the carburetor first, see how that ran, make a change in the spark plug next, see if that was better or worse; the timing, and on and on. In other words, don't take your tattoo machine and bend the front spring, the back spring, change the cushion and then turn up the power. Don't do all of those things at one time. Start with one thing at a time, when you adjust your tattoo machine, and then try it. And you can't just run it and see if it sounds right. Get it to where it's running well, then listen to that sound and adjust for that sound later. Some people do it by eyeball, others make little jigs or gauges that measure the angle or space between the bar and the front spring. Some people use other techniques. There's a million different subtleties. You could probably make an hour video just on adjusting a machine with a Jones frame or a Spaulding

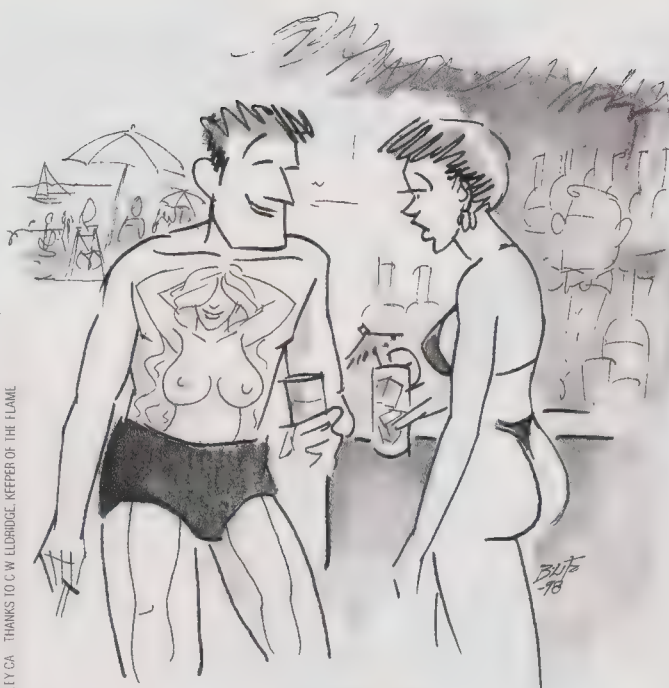
**Two out
of ten people
who buy
machines
from tattoo
suppliers are
dissatisfied
with them.**

Supreme or one of Big Joe's aluminum machines. There's a lot of good builders around, and there's some private builders out there that you don't even know about that will build it your way. Jack Rudy showed me a machine that somebody out in the mountains of northern California made for him, and I have yet to call the guy and get one. But look at Jack Rudy's tattooing. It's as good as it could possibly be. I mean, you have to say that a lot of it is the man behind the machine, right? Well, I'll tell you what, if the machine fucks up, you're going to be in trouble too. It's a partnership there; you and the machine are partners to do a good job—your skill and ability, and the way the machine is running. You need to sit down with somebody. You can get my number from my editor, and I'll tell you what, I'll run, fly or skip rope all the way down to Panama. I enjoy Central America. My brother's a doctor in Costa Rica. I don't see him very often, but I'd love to come down and sit there and help you.

One of the attendant problems with a lot of tattoo machines is the fact that the wire that goes from the coil up to the top binding post breaks a lot, because a tattoo machine generates an awful lot of vibration for something that size. It causes the connections to break. The rear binding post that's insulated from the frame, that little wire, it breaks too. So I have wanted, for years, to build a tattoo machine that doesn't have these problems. I went up to Hudson Valley, New York, about a week ago to see a friend of mine there, basically to get away, but also to design a machine that doesn't behave like this. Also, if your local health inspector were to come in tomorrow and tell you to sterilize the power head on your machine, well, after a few times in the autoclave, you'd have to junk the machine. They're just not built to take that steam pressure. If you recall in the news a couple years ago, they went after the dentists for the very same thing. The air-driven device that holds the tools that grind away on your teeth, they opened one up, and it was full of pieces of gum and broken teeth and whatever parts mishmashing and slopping around in there. Of course, they put a sterile bit in there, and it's been corrected now and hurray for them! But our problem is still there, I think. So what we did, we sat there working on the old C&C machine for about eight days. We took a solid piece of aluminum, and we ground and hacked and chewed on it until we had a totally enclosed, wireless, power head-tattoo machine. I haven't had the time to get it together since I've been back, but I'll keep you posted. This machine is nowhere. You can't see it anywhere. And it goes together with aircraft precision. I'll let you know in the future how it works. It looks pretty good and it's not too heavy.

While we're on the subject of mechanical contrivances, there's this same fellow up there, Tony C.,

I would suggest that you call me at my studio and invite me down to Panama for a couple of months.



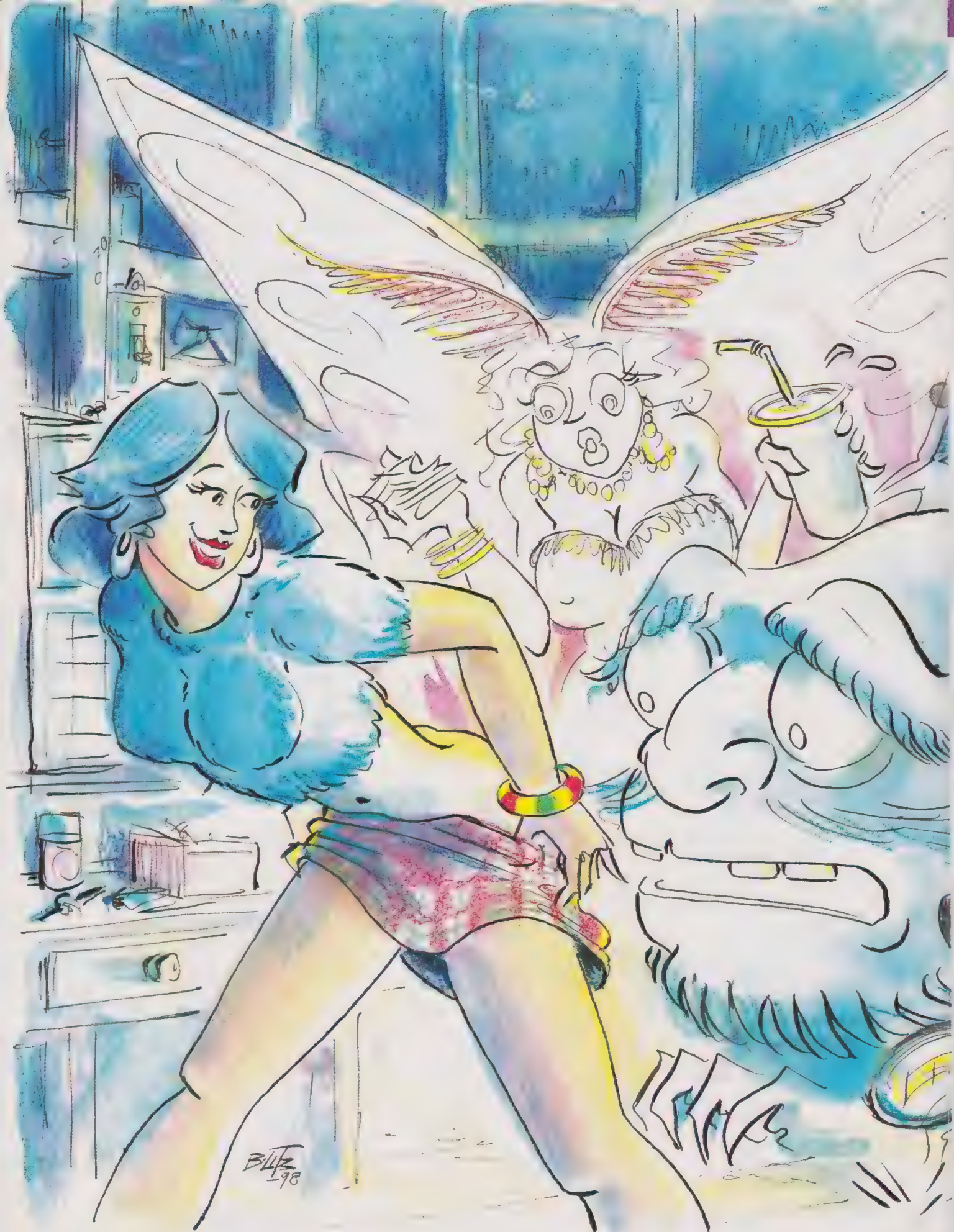
ORIGINAL IDEA FROM THE ELIZABETH WEINZIRL COLLECTION AT TATTOO ARCHIVE, BERKELEY CA. THANKS TO C W LUDRIDGE, KEEPER OF THE FLAME.

"Nice Tits."

• • •

who had some pretty interesting thoughts about the voting system. Everybody gets around, sooner or later, to talking about the bible or politics or your girlfriend. Well, in this case, it'd be all three. But he had a very interesting point of view on voting. You may have heard me talk in the past about the guy who invented the voting machine, and he feels like it's a flop at this point. It's not really functioning correctly. I heard him on the radio just for a brief moment, and the point he raised was about an election he saw in Florida and one out in Arizona, and he feels that the machine may have been tampered with. Well, who knows—hell, I don't know. But a lot of people observed these elections. The one in Florida, for example, was found to be out of hand and out of line—that was back in the early '50s or late '40s, I believe. But the one in Arizona was just in the last couple of years. I really don't want to pinpoint the case, because I don't have the dates and facts right here in front of me, but I believe it did happen. Anyway, Tony's comment on the voting system goes like this: Basically, it's voting through your own personal home computer, by way of your telephone line. You actually see your vote pop up on your own home computer screen when you vote. And you can see everybody else's votes also. And you may, if you wish, through the miracle of your computer, tally up the entire nation's votes. Yes, it violates your privacy, and I say, so what. It's already violated anyway. People are buzzing that the voting machine is no longer the sacred cow it once was. Well, I don't know much about it yet, but it's still the same old scenario; the government investigating itself again. It smells kind of bad, don't it? Kind of like the turd on the old wino's shoe. ■

—See ya, Zeke.



BUNNY

AND THE FOO DOG

"Where am I?" asked Bunny as she sat upright and stared in amazement at the giant, blue Foo dog.

"You're over there," answered the dog in a deep, throaty tone. "And I'm here."

"No, I'm here," chirped the moth, doing her best to talk with a mouthful of sandwich.

"No you're not," said the dog. "You're *over there*."

"The girl is *over there*," responded the moth. "You just said so."

"Technically speaking, we're *both* over there," said Bunny, suddenly joining in on the animated conversation and forgetting completely about her strange new surroundings.

"Impossible," said the Foo dog.

"It's a matter of your point of view," added Bunny. "From where I sit, I'm *here*, and you're *there*. From where you sit, I'm *there* and... I mean, I'm *here*... Oh, heaven's sake, this doesn't work at all!"

"See? It isn't as easy as you think," said the dog, nodding.

"It is too," said the moth. "I'm here. You're the one that's *over there*! And, if the little lady would sit on your shoulders, she would be *over there* too! Care for a bite of sandwich?"

"I don't think so," said Bunny politely.

"It's a Monte Cristo," teased the moth with a wink.

"It sounds yummy, but what I'd really like is a sip of—"

"Smoothie!" offered the moth, splashing the cup of bright red liquid as she spoke.

"Well, I'd prefer water, but, if that's all you have," continued Bunny as she got up off the floor.

"All I have?" answered the moth. "How about a vanilla, marshmallow, ice-cream soda or a genuine double espresso decaf mocha latte?" And, with that, the moth's wings folded shut like huge, silk shutters and opened, seconds later, to reveal two frosty parfait glasses; one topped with creamy brown foam and the other with snowy whipped cream. "Or maybe a nice cold Mamosa with French Champagne and Florida orange juice?"

"Now, now," interjected the Foo dog, squinting grotesquely to hold his monocle in place. "I think from the sound of her voice, she might be a little too young for that," he said as he bumped into the table.

"Water would be just fine," Bunny responded. "Really."

"Say, what is your name, anyway?" asked the dog, sniffing the air to get his bearings.

"Bunny."

"That's going to be a problem," said the dog.

"Yes, that's going to be a *big* problem," agreed the moth. "We already have an *Alex* Bunny."

"Do you have whiskers and long ears?" asked the dog, wrinkling his nose. "I'm having a bit of a problem seeing that kind of detail in this light—"

"Of course not," answered Bunny as she moved her hand up and down in front of the dog's eyes.

"Have you got any other distinguishing marks?" quizzed the dog, adjusting his monocle.

"Well," answered Bunny, a bit perplexed, "I do have a tattoo."

"Impossible," exclaimed the moth, flitting suddenly here and there to scrutinize both of Bunny's legs and arms.

"A real, honest-to-goodness tattoo? Now, you wouldn't be fibbing, would you, child?" said the dog, with a grumpy scowl.



**"But I don't understand,"
said Bunny.**

"It's
on my bum," said Bunny.

"On her bum!" they replied in unison.

"I guess it wouldn't hurt to show you," said Bunny. "Everybody seems to show everybody their tattoos nowadays." And, with that, she twirled cutely around, inserted the tip of her thumb under the waistband of her plaid, parochial school miniskirt and exposed, in one quick second, the two bright red Bing cherries on the canvas of her pink, schoolgirl fanny.

"Woof," barked the Foo dog as he plopped unceremoniously on his rump.

The moth simply swooned and passed out.

Now, Bunny had received a lot of different reactions to her tattoo, but this response was new.

"Oh my heavens," she said. "I hope that beautiful moth isn't—"

"Don't make such a fuss," grumbled the dog. "She does that all the time. Moth spends more time asleep than she does awake. As for me," he continued arrogantly, "I sat down because I slipped." And, with that, he tossed his hips, knocked Bunny flat and—without so much as a *pardon me*—stepped over her outstretched body, fetched a rolled up newspaper from the shelf and began fanning himself like a pasha.

"Slipped?" said Bunny. "I'm a pretty good judge of people and I'd say that you were more... *taken aback*. That's it. Taken aback!"

"You think so, do you?" responded the dog as he tripped over Bunny's foot.

"You're facing the wrong direction," said Bunny as she reached out and aimed the Foo dog toward the center of the action.

"Where am I?" whimpered the moth.

"It's all right," said Bunny in a comforting tone. "I'm Bunny and your dog friend—"

"My name is Foo," said the dog, overhearing the conversation.

"Your dog friend Foo is here too," Bunny continued. "I really don't know why you got so excited. Having a tattoo really isn't that uncommon—"

"Ooooh," swooned the moth.

"I don't suggest you repeat that dialogue," interjected the dog. "Moth will only faint again."

"And why is that?" asked Bunny.

"Quite simply," began the dog, "it's against the law to have a tattoo. Even if it's hidden where no one can see it under a little plaid miniskirt."

"That's how it seems to me too," said Bunny, adjusting her hemline. "Ever since I got my Bing cherries from Ink Pusher Sam, I've been in ever so much trouble. Strangers chasing me every which way."

"It's like that all over the kingdom," nodded the dog. "But especially in Ink Land."

"Ink Land? Don't you mean, *England*?" asked Bunny.

"No, *Ink Land*!" repeated the dog. "All the tattoo artists have gone underground, and artist models like Moth and myself are forced to take refuge in places like this."

"You're an artist model?" said Bunny as she helped Moth return to an upright position.

"We certainly are," said the dog. "A very honorable profession it is. And we used to make a pretty good living at it too—Moth and me and Snake—Eagle, of course—and Koi Fish and all the rest. But since the big scare, the very best tattoo artists have gone underground. Some of the most respected names in all of tattooing have simply upped and vanished—Alex Bunny, Lyle Turtle, Gill the Krill, Brian Egret—you can't find a living legend to save your life. Sometimes it makes me want to—"

"But, with all those tattoos," said Bunny, "Why did you seem so surprised to see my Bing cherries?"

Before the dog could answer, Moth sighed, folded her wings and collapsed again.

"Oh, my dear," said Bunny.

"You've really got to whisper when you talk about *you-know-what*, or she'll do that all day," suggested the dog.

"But I don't understand," said Bunny.

"It's very simple. Lots of unskilled scratchers—rodents and snaggle-toothed weasels mostly—ruined it for all of us. Tattoo shops sprouted up everywhere. They plied their craft for all the wrong reasons. Posers they were—reborn and addicted to ink! Huge lines formed in front of their studios. Soon the weekend scratchers and art flunkies decided to jump aboard and share in the money. They ordered from catalogs, read how-to books, went to school on the Internet. Next thing you know, there were tattoo discount stores, tattoo pushcarts and tattoo garage sales. Rodents and weasels were setting up shop in the middle of the street! As soon as one scratcher would grab someone by the arm and seduce them over to their den, two more would tempt them back with discount prices and stolen designs. It was very nasty. Everybody trying to outbid the other. If a rodent would do a tattoo for \$10, a snaggle-toothed weasel would do it for five."

"Where did they come from?" asked Bunny.

"Under rocks. There were so many of them that customers were being dragged off and never heard from again. Why go to the best in the world like Filip Gnu and the Family Lion, or the fabled Bob and Charlie Rabbits when you could get a tracing paper copy of the same tattoo for half the price? Or less. Then the disaster happened."

"The disaster?" said Bunny.

"It was only a matter of time before somebody got sick."

"Oh no," responded Bunny as she stroked Moth's forehead.

"They didn't know about clean. Not an autoclave in the whole bunch. They didn't care. So," the dog continued, "the powers that be—"

"The powers that be?" said Bunny.

"Maggots primarily," continued the dog. "Self-righteous servants of the people. They closed the shops and put the artists out of work."

"But what about *my* tattoo?" asked Bunny.

"Shhhhh," reprimanded the dog.

"Why did my tattoo of Bing cherries surprise you and your friend the moth?" said Bunny, whispering.

"It's easier if I show you," said the dog and, with that, he stood up, sniffed the air and, pushing aside a loose board with his nose, stepped through a convenient space in the wall. "Follow me," he said.

"Where are we going?" mumbled Moth as she groggily lifted her head and tried shaking life back into her wings.

"To the fast-food restaurant," said the dog.

"I'm actually not hungry right this second," said Bunny.

"I'm just *saying* that," said the dog as he looked back over his shoulder. Then, dropping his voice, leaned over and whispered into Bunny's ear. "I don't want Moth to know where we're *really* going," he said.

"Really going?" said Bunny, doing her best to whisper. "And where would that be?"

"To the magical, mystical ruins," whispered the dog.

"The magical, mystical ruins?" exclaimed Bunny, loudly.

Hearing that, Moth, like an autumn leaf, spread her spotted wings, coughed a little cough and, with all the delicious drama of a silent screen heroine, placed the back of her wrist to her forehead and fainted dead away.

—To be continued



SKIN & INK Pinups

JOLEEN

Photographer: Robin Perine
Tattoo by: [illegible]

Want to have your photograph published on these pages? No problem. Simply submit your best, most appealing prints or slides along with all pertinent photographer and model data (over 18, please) to SKIN & INK Pinups, c/o SKIN & INK Magazine, P.O. Box 1069, Pasadena, CA 91102. Please send an SASE if you want the photos returned. About five issues from now, the winner will be voted on by the readers, and you might very well be the recipient of a lot of terrific stuff. You don't want to go through all that pain at the tattoo shop and keep the results covered up, do you? Share with us. Experiencing pain and displaying the fruits of that encounter is part of SKIN & INK's special tantric meditation for reaching eternal bliss. Yes, followers, the first step to selfless enlightenment is to mail your photo today. ■

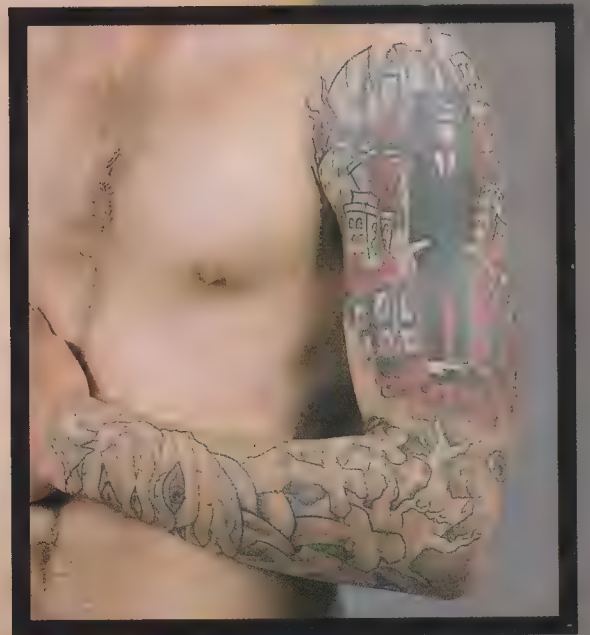
Pinups

LISA'S BOYFRIEND

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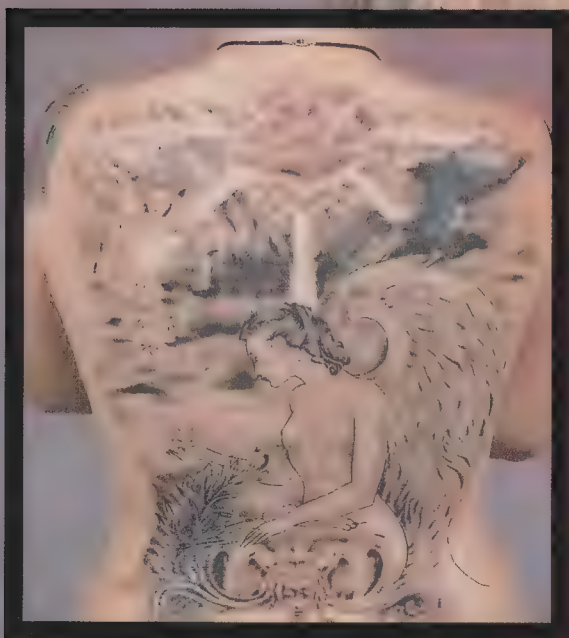
Robin Farrow

Tattoos by Mike McElroy



Pinups

1940s
Pinupqueen
Katie Finner
Styled by Mike McDowell
Hair and makeup by Valerie Harker



Pinups

SKULL
Photographer:
Deidre Lamb
Tattoos by:
various artists



Pinups

Photography by
Dorinda (1984)



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One of the West Coast's older shops, West Coast Tattoo on 5th and Main in Los Angeles, has been open since 1955. They've moved a couple times, but it's always been on Main Street. Tennessee Dave has been working for West Coast Tattoo since 1962. Dave is 56 years old and was born in 1941. West Coast Tattoo is still the home of the \$10 name. Probably one of the few shops left on the entire west coast that will do a name for \$10 on your arm, single-line script. This shop has become part of Los Angeles history. Many young sailors and Marines received their first tattoo here. At that time, they used to ship the boys out on trains and Greyhound buses from depots located very close to the shop.

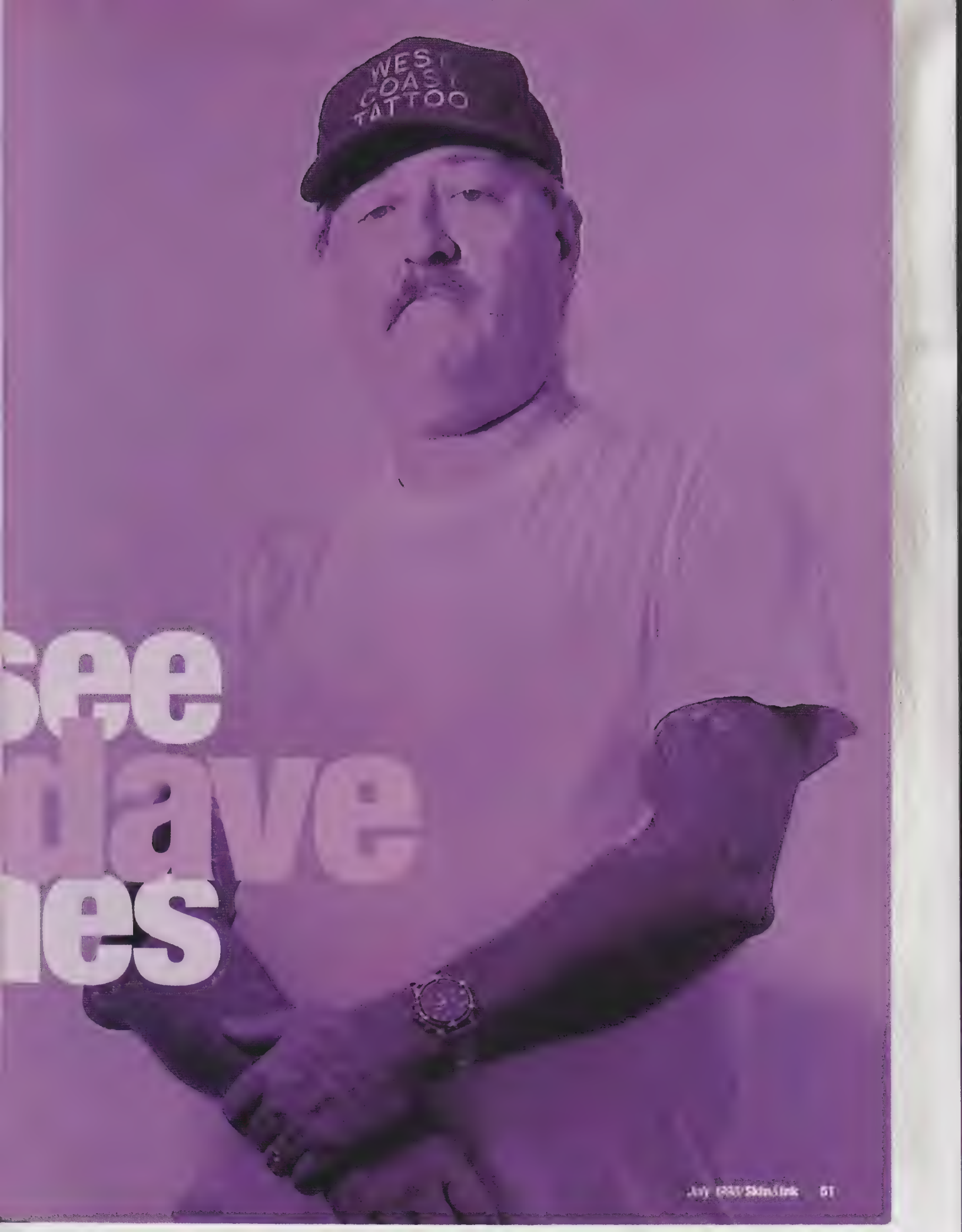
Dave is probably one of the best old-style tattooists in the country today and is also excellent at executing any of the newer genres of tattooing. Tennessee Dave, whose brother Greg James has gone on to become one of the all-time great tattooists, started out with his brother Greg in his other shop in East L.A. called the Rose and Dagger at 6411 Whittier Boulevard. Dave is well-known among people who know tattooing; people who are not looking for the instant tattoo but who want a true old-school tattoo. These are the collectors that seek Dave out. Of course this isn't a shop in a glistering mini-mall or a shop with ambient electronic New Age music blaring. This isn't a shop full of somewhat gloomy types with big clothes. This is the real deal.

The neighborhood is a little seedy, the crowd might be a bit rough, but the tattooing is excellent. Upon seeking Dave out for this interview, I felt honored to be able to speak to one of L.A.'s true legends.

SURVIVING L.A.'S TATTOO WARS: AN INTERVIEW WITH TENNESSEE DAVE JAMES

By R.J. Musolf

If you get a chance to go down and see Dave, I'd highly recommend it. The experience is worthwhile. He's personable, knowledgeable and a true tattooer. He has two other chairs: Big John has been with him for many years, and in his other chair he'll often feature visiting artists. Dave has just moved the shop to 113 East Fifth Street, Los Angeles, which is just two stores down from the old place.



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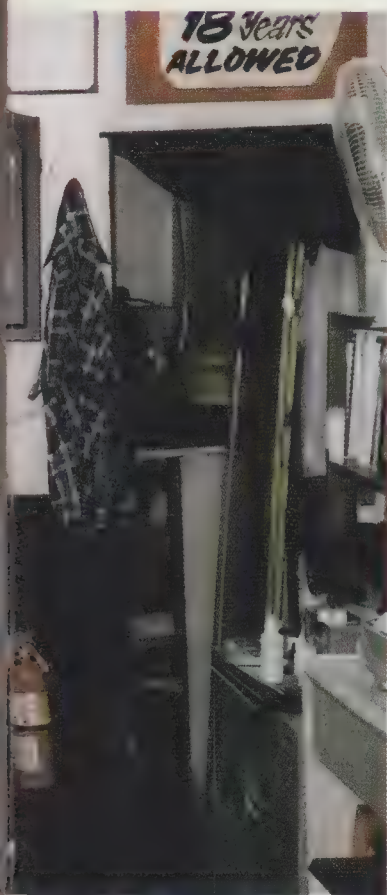
Dave lives and breathes tattoos. He got his first one at the age of 15. He has stuck with it, goes to all the conventions and talks to people. Here's the guy in the know. Here's the artist who's often ignored by a lot of the people in the business today, and it's a shame. He has a world of knowledge and is more than willing to share it with other tattooers who are interested. Dave doesn't really care for a whole lot of attitude. He's a pretty laid-back guy. So, if you approach him in a polite manner and are truly interested in tattooing, I feel that there's a lot to be learned from him. Dave is part of the living tattoo history; an important man, like many important men and somewhat overlooked by all the flashy, new, sell yourself tattooers in the world. I'm glad that, with this interview, Dave will be getting some well-deserved recognition.



**Tenn Dave James
West Coast Tattoo**

113 E. 5th St.
L.A., CA 90013
(213) 629-8101





Up bright and early this morning, heading towards downtown L.A. to try and interview Tennessee Dave.

The shop opens at 9 a.m. Yup, you heard me right. On Fifth and Main, quite the neighborhood. Over 30 years at the same location. So now, trying to swill some coffee and drive my car, I'll pick up Tabu Tattoo's Dan-O, and we'll head downtown and see what Dave has to say. [Later, with Tennessee Dave.]

R.J. MUSOLF: When did you start tattooing?

TENNESSEE DAVE: Uh, jeez, I guess about 30 years ago.

RJ: Where'd you get the first tattoo?

TD: My first tattoo was put on in Chicago, done by Alexander, the world's greatest freehand artist.

RJ: How old were you, Dave?

TD: I think I was 15.

RJ: Was there any age limit then?

TD: Yeah, 18, but they had this deal where these guys outside standing on the street corners y'know, they'd rent IDs to you.

RJ: Rent IDs?

TD: Yeah, for five bucks they'd loan you an ID to get a tattoo. The first time I went down to do that, I rent this guy's ID, I didn't even look at it, I go in, and the guy said, "You got an ID?" And I said, "Oh, sure, here." And I give him the ID, and he looked at and says, "Get the fuck outa here, you're not 30 years old!" And, so then we go down the street to Alexander's, and he says, "Well, I'd like to help you out. If you had a tattoo on you, I could go ahead and tattoo you. But without a tattoo, there's not much I can do," and so on, like that. So me and my buddies went home, got us a bottle of India ink and put a little tattoo on our arms, let 'em heal up, and then went back on down there to Alexander and said, "Can you cover this up?" And that's how I got my first tattoo. After that, it was never a problem.

RJ: You just started getting them? When did you get interested in being a tattoo artist, was it right away?

TD: I knew it from day one. I was hooked. After that, it was all I could think about.

RJ: Did you start hand-poking them on your buddies?

TD: Nope, I never did anything like that, surprisingly. I had my run-ins with the law and whatever and all of that, but I never did any handwork on anybody.

RJ: So did you go into tattooing right away or did you have another career and then work your way into tattooing?

TD: Well, I bummed around the country for a long time, doing this, doing that. And when I finally got here to Los An-

geles, I was working for a trailer manufacturer out there on Slauson. In the evenings I used to come down here and hang around Sailor Ted—go for coffee. I didn't have anywhere else to go. I had this girl, and she stole my car and went back east with it. She missed her mommy and daddy.

RJ: So there were a lot of shops in downtown L.A.?

TD: Just the one. This one here, that was it. Matter of fact, there was just one at that time, in this area. In all of L.A. County, I'd have to say that there were only three or four shops. So I was here. It was Leroy, Greg Darden and Bob Shaw's place. So if you were from the Valley and you wanted to get a tattoo, you'd have to come here.

RJ: So you'd just come down and bullshit with 'em.

TD: Yeah, just hanging out and hanging out and hanging out. I had nowhere else to go. And this little apartment that I was staying at on Adams and Figueroa, there by the college, by USC, was right next door to the animal house. The one they made the movie about, Delta House—they had their fraternity house right next door. That was a lot of fun.

RJ: When you finally got in, did you do an apprenticeship in those days or did you just start tattooing?

TD: It's funny how it happened. I was standing there, I believe it was a Saturday afternoon, something like that—it was a daytime thing. And the only one I'd ever talked to was Teddy. I'd been down and got a tattoo from Captain Jim. I got the rebel flag there. I was hanging there one day, and Jim was telling Teddy he was going off to Mexico for the summer, and all this and that. And Teddy's saying, "I'm not gonna work the place alone," and so on and so forth. And I don't know what Teddy said to Jim, but Jim come over to me and said, "You wanna learn how to tattoo?" And I said, "Hell yes!" He said, "Be in here Monday morning. But don't quit your job," which I immediately did, I quit my job. Y'know, I wanted to be here! And Monday morning he started me out working on paper and doing this and that. He had this other old guy named Mike, he was breaking in. But he'd been breaking in Mike for seven or eight years. Mike never did get the basics of it.

RJ: Mike wasn't a fast learner?

TD: Not even. So it was like I started working paper on Monday. By Thursday I'd lined up a couple of guys to do some work on them. I did a few tattoos on these guys. By the following Tuesday, it was Teddy's day off, and he gave me the keys and said, "You're on the job now."

RJ: And that was it.

TD: It was a week. It took me exactly a week to go from playing with the paper to tattooing somebody.

RJ: But downtown L.A. at that time was pretty jumping, wasn't it? You guys were close to the train station, the bus depot.

TD: We had both bus depots, we had Greyhound here on Sixth and Los Angeles, and we had Trailways on Sixth and Main, and the train station down here where it's always been.

RJ: Because I remember down here in the '60s, like in '66, it was a lot of fun. It wasn't like nowadays. Things have gotten a little bit rougher down here.

TD: Yeah. I'll tell you what else we had at that time. Viet Nam was just starting to get going then, y'know. Right here on the corner of Fifth and Main—it's called the Frontier Hotel now—it was the Du Roslyn Hotel at that time. It was condemned. The building was closed, but the mezzanine floor was a USO.



RJ: Oh, so you had all the military?

TD: We had a lot of them. Friday afternoon, here come the buses from Camp Pendleton—eight, ten, 12 buses with all these Marines on the corner of Fifth and Main. They were here for the weekend. We were open 24 hours then—we were running 24 hours. And that's all we did was tattoo Marines the whole weekend. It was great.

RJ: Experience wise, I imagine the number of bodies that went through your chair was incredible compared with today.

TD: Absolutely, absolutely. You know, we worked with plastic stencils then, and there were just certain designs that you did every weekend. The little bulldog with the campaign hat, USMC underneath it. We had another one that was a bulldog with a hard hat, USMC over the top, Devil Dog under the bottom. We'd wear out two stencils over the weekend. Literally wear the stencils out to the point where they fell apart.

RJ: Those stencils were a little bit trickier to work with weren't they?

TD: Well yeah, because they relied upon—what do you call it—black pigment. Just sprinkle a little black pigment in there, a little Vaseline on the arm, stick in on there. But if you weren't careful and started in the wrong place, you'd wipe the whole thing off. There was an old duck in Santa Ana—when I was down in Santa Ana working—he'd put the

stencil on somebody and do the whole complete outline, wipe it off and then freehand the middle.

RJ: Just do the edge quick and then fill it in.

TD: Yeah, he'd do the whole edge of it, then rely on his memory. And let me tell you something, he'd forget his cock if it wasn't attached to him.

RJ: You were downtown at West Coast Tattoo. Was it West Coast then?

TD: Yeah, it's always been West Coast.

RJ: And did you work the Pike too?

TD: I worked out on the Pike. Jim had tried for years and years and years to get into the Pike, but he could never find nobody to bring him in. He had a couple of bad raps from San Diego with tattooing minors. Actually he wasn't the one who did it—it was his daughter who did it—but he took the blame for it. And down in Long Beach, at that time, you not only had to get a health permit, you had to get a police permit to work. You had to go to the health department and the police department, and, if the police department didn't want you in there, you didn't get in there, and that was that. Well, Jim was the one who broke that one wide open. He finally found a lawyer who would take on City Hall, and it turned out that this was an unwritten rule of the police department. It was never a law in the city. It was the police department who



tooting was. Orsini came out here to California, and was looking for a spot. Jim got him in with Fred Borden. Once Al Orsini got in, they were pals with Jim, and, the next thing you know, that's what led to the lawsuit against Long Beach for denying Jim his license. And the officer almost lost his job over that; the lieutenant that was involved with it.

RJ: I kinda remember the Pike, and it seemed like all the shops were down in the— what was it called?

TD: The zone. You

passed judgment on who was gonna tattoo and who wasn't.

RJ: And that was Jim from West Coast downtown here?

TD: Yeah, it was Captain Jim. And, I think, I don't know for sure, but I think that the cop who started that was a personal friend of Bert Grimm's. You know what I'm saying?

RJ: Oh yeah, that wouldn't be too unusual for those days.

TD: You know Bert? Bert pulled a lot of weight in Long Beach. Don't let nobody kid ya. Bert pulled a lot of weight in Long Beach.



RJ: So then you guys opened a new shop down there—

TD: Actually, what happened was, Jim was friends with Al Orsini from back in Buffalo, New York, when Jim was an alcoholic, and they were pals together. They opened a couple of businesses—fishing posts, stuff like that. They're old pals from way, way back. From before Jim ever knew what tat-

could only tattoo in entertainment zones. And the only entertainment zone in Long Beach was the New Pike, Chestnut to Broadway. It was about four blocks long. That area right there, from where Bert Grimm's was to the ocean, and from Chestnut to Broadway. I do believe that was the entertainment zone. You couldn't do any tattooing outside of that.

RJ: So that's why all the shops were clustered there?

TD: All the shops were clustered in. Why would you want to be anywhere else, 'cause that's where all the people were. Guys came down there to pick up girls, and guys took their wives and girlfriends down there 'cause that was the place to be.

RJ: People don't remember that the Pike was a real nice amusement park for years and a lot of fun. So what was the name of the shop down there that you went to?

TD: I originally went to work in—well, it didn't actually have a name, it was just called 3-6-2.

RJ: That was it?

TD: It didn't get a name until Bob Shaw bought the building and kicked us out.

RJ: Is that the one that had "tattoo" in the tile on the floor or was that a later one?

TD: I think that was Steve's place, Gallery Tattoo.

RJ: Because after they tore it down, the floor was still there. Now I wish I had a picture.

TD: We didn't actually have a name. What we moved into was the old Four-O-Cafe, which was two blocks down from Bert Grimm's place. We had Leroy between us, and then we were in 3-6-2. We didn't even build a rail, we just took a rail saw and cut the bar in half.

RJ: Really?

TD: Yeah, just cut the top half of the bar off and left it standing there, put on a gate, and that was our rail. Plenty of room



in there once you cut half the bar out.

RJ: Those were all seven days a week until, what, two or three in the morning?

TD: Oh yeah. And another thing, see, they made you close at 2 a.m.

RJ: The city did?

TD: No, the police department. You're gonna close when the bars close. You talk about restriction of trade, Long Beach was ridiculous.

RJ: Every morning you had pretty much a lineup of sailors.

TD: You could open at any time but you had to close at 2 a.m. That's another rule we broke down there, because we refused to close. We refused to turn customers away at 2 a.m. They said, "You do that one more time, we're gonna arrest you." We said, "Come on down tomorrow night, 'cause we're gonna be here!" And again, they arrested a whole bunch of us.

RJ: So that was a good scene down there. A lot of great people came down there.

TD: Oh yeah, a lot of great people: Don Nolan, his brother there in Hong Kong town—Tom Yeomans. Both of 'em are fantastic tattoo artists. Rio De Janeiro, there was Lou Louis's son and Ernie Sutton, Bert Grimm, Bob Shaw, Bob Palms, Chris Thornton—

RJ: You, of course. You were down there.

TD: Yeah, but I was a very minor player there. You had Leroy, and then Owen Jensen tattooed there until the day he died.

RJ: I didn't know that. Owen was down there?

TD: Owen was working with Leroy Minu.

RJ: Oh, I thought Owen had worked in L.A. I assumed it was somewhere downtown here.

TD: Owen Jensen lived in Los Angeles. You can find an old Owen Jensen machine that's got his address out here on 78th street. But that was in the '30s and '40s. He finished his career in Long Beach. The last 20 years he tattooed he tattooed in Long Beach.

RJ: Did you meet him then?

TD: Oh, I love Owen. Owen was a personal friend of mine. He was the sweetest man, I'll tell you. You couldn't find a nicer guy. He tattooed with his back to the customers.

RJ: Oh yeah?

TD: Yeah, that's the way the stations were set up. But he didn't worry about people. Nobody ever hurt that old man. Nobody ever hurt him.

RJ: So you just stuck with it and stuck with it, and you ended up back downtown L.A. and owning the place.

TD: Long Beach was always too part-time for me. I only worked there weekends. Well, at the 3-6-2 shop, I used to go down and break my brother in, Greg James, and we had him working in Long Beach. He worked nights down there. And on Friday afternoon, I picked him up, and we'd jump in the car. I'd work here days, get off at four o'clock, pick him up, go shoot to Long Beach, get there by five. We'd work Friday and Saturday. We'd work till sometimes five in the morning. We'd get all of Grimm's overflow, 'cause he stuck to the law. The way it worked was, they'd sign everybody up—everything they could do between whatever and 2 a.m.—they were all signed up and locked in. And anybody else that came in, they said, "We're booked. We can't help ya."

RJ: So then they'd come down the street.

TD: Right, They'd all come down to us. We made a small fortune off their overflow, what they turned away.

RJ: And that still is back in the era of stencils right?

TD: Yeah, it was all stencils. There were no transfer machines then. Transfer machines didn't come into being until the '80s.

RJ: So you guys had to crank them out every day.

TD: Yeah, I was working seven days a week. I didn't take any days off back then.

RJ: You got this shop and you have your shop in East L.A. When did you take over West Coast Tattoo?

TD: I believe it was 1988 that Jim died. And that was the agreement all along: "Stick with me, and it will be yours when I'm gone."



RJ: Well that was kinda an old-time thing, you don't see that so much anymore. People were loyal.

TD: Bob used to buy me lunch twice a week. He'd say, "C'mon and work for me." And Fred Thornton ended up coming in with us at 3-6-2. When we got that place, Al Orsini, Fred and Jim went in as partners. And then they got in a big fight between the three of them. Jim bought out Fred, and Fred bought out Al and so on, and then they got this little enemy thing going.

RJ: I think it's funny that you just called it by the numbers, 3-6-2, because that's the thing now with all these fancy restaurants and stuff. So you guys were kinda in the forefront of this whole thing.

TD: We were the ones that had the sign out front. See, if you remember in those days, they said, "You're going to get a tattoo, go down to the corner," meaning Bert Grimm's. Well Jim came up with one. He goes down to the sign painter and gets a sign, just eight-feet high, really, just a beautiful sign. Scotty painted it for us, and it said, "This Is the Corner." You remember that now? And down below it said, "We Tattooed Your Dad." And I'll tell you, it frosted Bob Shaw's ass. It really frosted his ass, because his place was known as "the Corner," and Bert Grimm's was "the Corner," because Fred was in the middle of the block and so was Leroy. So we get this building down there with "This Is the Corner," and the letters were this Goddamn big, you couldn't miss 'em. It pointed right up Chestnut to Long Beach Boulevard, I mean Ocean. You couldn't miss it. It was great.

RJ: So did you guys get along pretty well, or was there a lot of rivalry between the shops?

TD: Well, I used to go in and see Bob all the time—y'know, Bob, Tom, Don. Before I even started working in Long Beach, I used to go down every night and get tattooed by Don and Tom at Bert Grimm's. I'd go down after closing.

RJ: Bob Shaw owned Bert Grimm's, right? Did he own it then?

TD: He and Bert Grimm were partners, and then Bert sold it out to him when he moved up to Oregon. Then Bob took in Colonel Todd as his partner. Bob and Colonel Todd were childhood friends.

RJ: They were? Because wasn't Colonel Todd involved in that shop for a long time?

TD: Yeah, well he bought it during the early '70s. No, after that. Maybe around '75 or '76. Right when we opened the Tradewinds Tattoo.

RJ: Yeah, that's when I got tattooed down there. That was sort of the end of the Pike. In the '60s, I was too young to get tattooed there.

TD: Oh yeah, they were real strict about that.

RJ: Yeah, mere child that I am.

TD: Every weekend I used to go down to see Tom and Don. They were doing a partnership thing then. Tom did all the outlining, and Don did all the color work.

RJ: I've heard that.

TD: I've got three different pieces they did.

RJ: I don't think anyone's doing that anymore.

TD: The shark-girl [showing his arms]—you can see it's kinda different. Tom outlined it and Don colored it in.

RJ: Was that for speed or just how they worked?

TD: That was just how they worked. Then this piece here, I remember Tom outlined it, and then he and Jersey Ernie went off somewhere to make some marijuana brownies, and me and Don were sitting there, and it was like five or six in the morning, the sun was up, and he was finishing up the color work, and my arm was all swelled up—

RJ: A lot of people were using a little bit heavier touch. I remember the sound of the machines down there. It seemed like everybody hit a little harder. Is that the truth?

TD: Tom tattooed me, and you barely felt it. He had the sweetest hand. But he was using a six-needle outliner. What he was doing was taking a seven and pulling the center back, using the seventh one to keep it round.



RJ: A lot of guys used the big, heavy outliners then.

TD: Oh yeah, everybody. The only one who was using a light machine then was Bob Shaw.

RJ: Well, I know we've talked about it before that all these people came around and showed you a three outliner, and a nice, tight five does a nice, clean line, and now we've got all these kids that are doing "traditional tattooing," and they're hammering all this stuff on with big, loose fives and sevens. I keep telling them to go look at someone who got a tattoo 30 years ago, and it's a big fuzzy mess. It's just funny. They think they're being like the old-timers, but I think that a good three or five outline is gonna last.

TD: Yeah, well this was Jersey Ernie, and this was a five-needle liner.

RJ: What are you using mostly now?

TD: I'm using threes.

RJ: I thought you were.

TD: I get the tight threes.

RJ: Yeah, and you can always calligraphy a line.

TD: I have some fives in there if I'm gonna do something that really needs a five, but I don't use it that often. People who founded all this used to do you right with three, then take a round shader and go alongside of it, if you want that bold line. And it gives you a beautiful line without tearing the skin all up.

RJ: Well, anyway, that's just a technical thing that I wanted to get in here, because these kids, I don't think they realize what they're doing, what it's gonna look like.

TD: But you know who taught them about that partnership thing; Captain Jim when he was down there in San Diego. He actually had production-line tattooing. On the weekends there, it was just a sea of white hats, sailors. So Jim had a girl who would sell the tattoos for him. You'd come in: "Whaddya want?" "Well, I want an anchor." She'd sell you the anchor, collect the money, she'd shave your arm, lay the stencil on your arm, and you'd stand in line. Jim would outline it. The next guy would put the black shading, and the next guy would put the coloring in. Then we had another girl at the other end that would wash and bandage the tattoo.

RJ: Jeez. That's a funny thing when you say "wash and bandage"

in those days. Were you guys using the individual ink cups or anything?

TD: Oh, fuck no. No gloves. We used to get this—I can't remember the name of it now—corn-plaster medicine, the little, white porcelain jar. You'd go down to Thrifty's—it was corn medicine. And you cleaned the jar out, that's what we used for our ink jars. We had red, green and black. We didn't even use yellow. No blue, no purple, no brown. And people would come in and ask Jim if he'd put yellow in the tattoo, and he said, "I wouldn't put yellow in a sick pig." Because Bob Shaw was doing it, he was starting to use color, and Jim was afraid of it.

RJ: And you'd just fill the jars as they needed it.

TD: Oh yeah, the jar would get a little bit low, and you'd go in the back and get your big jar and put a couple of spoonfuls in the little thing. And a couple of times, I hate to say this, but you'd have a regular crust on the green. And you just stirred it back in, because that kept the green going good. We never had infections. We've run some crusty tattoos sometimes—some real cookies on the tattoos.

RJ: That's why I think that all this stuff nowadays is good, certain things out there, but some people get to a point where they get almost too paranoid.

TD: They take it to extremes. Like, you go down there and you see the guy's got a big bag over the top of the green soap. Well, this hand doesn't even get into the tattoo except for the last finger. Or they got the top half of the machine all wrapped in plastic and everything.

RJ: What I see with a lot of people is they're wrapping everything in plastic, then they're touching everything with their damn dirty gloves. I think they're better off to practice general cleanliness and use their hands.

TD: Use their *heads* is more like it. When you're done, wipe off the soap bottle. And the only part of the machine that gets into the tattoo is the needle. The machine itself, there's nothing to contaminate there, unless you're laying it on the guy, rubbing it up and down his arm.

RJ: But the main thing about you is how much you still love tattooing.

TD: Oh, I can't live without it. It's my thing. I dream about it.

RJ: I read that little thing where you said it doesn't matter about the size of a tattoo, if that's all the person can afford. I think that is the thing that a lot of people don't realize. The guy coming in for the Tasmanian devil is next year's backpiece.

TD: I had a guy just Monday, he picked out that Taz with the M-16, and it's priced up there. And he says, "That's the price? Can you make it smaller?" And I said, "How small you want to make it?" He said, "I don't know." So I went to the machine and I cut it down a little bit and I showed it to him and I told him 80 bucks, and he said, "I can only spend 50." So I said, "Let me make it a little smaller then." So I cut it down a little bit more, I showed it to him, he said fine, so we did it.

RJ: And he loved it and he got a great tattoo.

TD: It's what he could afford to spend.

RJ: And I think it's just as important for them as a big huge custom-piece sometimes.

TD: Look, here's a picture of me, a long time ago.

RJ: Oh my God.

TD: That's when we used to work 24 hours.

RJ: You look like you were working 24 hours! So what do

you think about everybody getting tattooed now and a million shops opening up?

TD: It confirms that it really is a legitimate art. And you gotta thank Ed Hardy for that. Ed Hardy and Lyle Tuttle. They're the ones who were willing to put themselves out, go on the talk shows. Y'know Lyle went on that Virginia Graham show 30 years ago. He used to be on call with a radio station. Every time a guest didn't show up, they'd call him, and he'd go down there and talk about tattooing. That was in the early '60s.

RJ: What do you think about the fact that anybody can just order the stuff, the equipment and whatnot, right out of a magazine?

TD: I think that's kinda sad. I think it should all be an apprenticeship type deal. I really do.

RJ: I think what's happening is that a lot of people are getting in there and making a lot of mistakes, but I guess, in the long run, it will just make us money, right?

TD: It's true, but what are you gonna do about it? Because the people who are selling supplies will sell them to anybody who sends them a money order. It used to be that Huck Spaulding wouldn't sell unless you were an established shop. None of these guys would.

RJ: When I did my apprenticeship, which wasn't all that many years ago, it still was real tight. I mean, you would be lucky if you could get Spaulding's phone number for \$125, and then you'd have to talk like hell to get something.

TD: Exactly. I'll give you an example of how tight it was, and I don't know this personally, it's a story I heard. When Zeke Owen first broke in, he was working for Ernie Sutton, and they decided they'd go check out the market in Puerto Rico and San Juan. So they tell Zeke, "Get on a plane, go to San Juan. See what the guy's doin'." The guy that was tattooing over there was Ace Harvin. Well, they send Zeke and they tell him, "Whatever you do, Zeke, don't go in the fuckin' tattoo shop. Stay away from that guy. Don't tell him who you are." And that's the first thing he did was, "Hi, I'm Zeke from L.A." Three hours later, Ace locked the doors and went fishing for two weeks.

RJ: That was it?

TD: Yeah, no information whatsoever. That's just the way it was.

RJ: I don't know how many people realize that Puerto Rico had some pretty big shops. What I found in traveling is that people don't realize that the world doesn't revolve around American tattooists. There's a helluva lot of other tattooists.

TD: Tell me about it. Really, really good ones too. Some people who aren't afraid to try things, because that guy Stephane [Chaudesaigues] in France—

RJ: What do you think of that kinda stuff? Do you like that style?

TD: It's outrageous. I wish I could do some of it. I really do. You don't really get a call for that kind of thing here, not really.

RJ: I think what happens is that a lot of those guys will lock into that specialty nowadays. People go and look for that, go to the conventions and stuff. Like you've even done that, I know you've got some collector pieces. You got one on your head.

TD: That's Creeper.

RJ: I saw you get that at the Inkslingers'. I love it.

TD: I thought my old lady was gonna have a fit when I had the hair cut.



Tennessee Dave James's work

RJ: So your wife still gets pissed when you get tattooed?

TD: No, it was just the head one. She don't care about tattoos, but the head one she says, "Of all the places in the world, why tattoo your head?" I told her, "Because it's there."

RJ: When you work on big stuff, do you like to do it in several sittings or are you into sitting 'em down and blasting it out all at one time?

TD: I think what works best is to do the whole outline in one setting, because you can generally do that in under six hours. And you don't worry if you got a bad line here or there or you run a line, and it doesn't go in exactly like you want it to. You come back later when you're doing the shading or the coloring, and you can fix it up. I learned that from Cliff [Raven] when he was doing the backpiece of the girl stealing the pearl from the octopus. And I remember seeing the outline and thinking, *Jesus, look at all those pad lines and false lines in there*. The whole was already there, it was just kinda like tagged in, like you would baste a hem, just to hold it together. Then you go in and do the finish work later. And I talked to Cliff about it, and he said, "I'll catch that up when I come in for my shading."

RJ: Robert Benedetti used to do that too. You knew Cliff then, too?

TD: Yeah, I knew Cliff. I knew Cliff before he ever went into Hollywood. When we first had this shop about 25 or 28 years ago, me and Sailor West worked in here. And I was sitting around one night just doing nothing, and this guy walked in and started talking to me, and he says, "You don't know me do you?" And he says, "I'm Cliff Raven." I said, "Well shit. I know you by name." And anyway, we got to talking, and I called up Don Nolan and I said, "Don, I got somebody here in the shop if you want to visit with him." He said, "Bring him down." He was living in San Pedro then.

RJ: Don was still working in Long Beach.

TD: Yeah, that was after he broke up with Tom. They weren't partners anymore.

RJ: That was before Cliff had Sunset [Sunset Strip Tattoo] or

any of that stuff?

TD: Oh yeah, he was still working in Chicago then.

RJ: Did you ever know Phil Sparrow?

TD: Yeah.

RJ: I never met Phil.

TD: I tried to get a tattoo from Phil once. He kicked me out. I wasn't old enough.

RJ: I don't think people realize that he kinda started the whole idea of the more "modern" tattoo shop. You know, a little bit friendlier, a little bit cleaner. Most people worked out of arcades then.

TD: They all worked out of arcades then. They all were working for the Mafia too. The Mafia owned all of State Street. And the way it operated then was you go in, you pick out your tattoo, you go pay the change guy, the change guy would write you out a receipt on one of those crank machines with three copies. You got a copy and you gave a copy to the tattoo artist.

RJ: A lot of them were Greeks weren't they?

TD: Yeah, a lot of Greeks.

RJ: Because everyone hears Mafia, they think Italian.

TD: Leo Leddick was one of the big guys, and Captain Jim worked for him—so did Leroy, Ernie Sutton, Phil Sparrow, Alexander. They all worked for him.

RJ: You remember that scene in Chicago, it's long gone. It's like the Bowery in New York.

TD: And that's the way it operated. Sailor Bill was the kinda guy who, if he wasn't sitting there, and someone walked in that he knew, he'd say, "Let me tattoo ya," hoping to get what they called a crown. What they called a *tip*. So he's in there one night, he's doing an eagle on some guy's chest, and here comes the boss. He looks at it, he goes back in the receipt bucket, and there ain't no eagle in the receipt bucket. And about three hours later, they took him in the basement and baseball batted him for about two hours.

RJ: Oh jeez.

TD: They thought he was clippin' the house. He wasn't clippin' the house, he was doing it for free. But then they told him not to do that shit. It was right after that that Jim and Leroy pulled out of town. They couldn't deal with that situation.

RJ: What about women in tattooing? A lot of people think that's a new thing, because there was Dainty Dot here in L.A.

TD: In the '50s you had Painless Nel down in San Diego and her sister Painful Joe.

RJ: Really?

TD: Yeah, Painless Nel and Painful Joe worked together. And Little Fran. They called her Pee-Pee, because she was all urine. She was a Godawful butcher. But Nel put on some beautiful work.

RJ: I guess it's not a new thing. If you do a little research, there's been women in tattooing pretty much forever.

TD: Oh yeah, sure, because you know the carny tattooers would bring their wives in to help out.

RJ: Did you ever do any of that scene, the carny scene?

TD: No I didn't. I went to one that you could consider a carny scene when I went to a gay men's tattoo party in Silver Lake one night. It used to be a club, and they came down here and invited me and Sullivan, and said, "Whatever you make, you can keep, we don't want a percentage." These guys just wanted to get tattooed. We weren't the only ones there. There were like four other tattoo artists.

RJ: Actually, a lot of those guys had some pretty nice tattooing. I remember that group.

TD: Sure. Some of those guys wouldn't go into a tattoo shop. But this was before the big AIDS thing, because we weren't wearing gloves or anything, just tattooing.

RJ: So what do you think about the convention scene? Do you like it or not?

TD: I love the convention scene but I just wish I could get more work. That's the thing. Everybody goes to a convention to see a certain person. They're all there for Primal Urge or—

RJ: Guy Atchison.

TD: Guy Atchison. Y'know, Dave Lum. These guys all get booked up.

RJ: Well there's good tattooers, but a lot of people don't realize that there's other good tattooers there.

TD: I manage to do a couple of tattoos at every convention, like the last one.

RJ: I agree with you there, and that's why we're doing this interview. I think, unfortunately, a lot of the magazines just go over and over on the same people. I don't know if you've noticed that. To me, there's a helluva lot of good tattooers out there that are simply ignored.

TD: I was hoping when Chris Fauch did that thing on me at International that maybe somebody else would pick up on it and think, *Hey, let's go talk to this guy*. It's funny, they do one on Dave Gibson, and the next five issues of the different magazines come out and have Gibson. I hoped the same thing would happen to me but I guess it didn't.

RJ: That's what we're trying to do with these interviews, let people know that there's other people out there. Good people.

TD: I don't know if this is relevant or not, but I was of the opinion that some of these magazines—or maybe not the magazine itself but the staff—are really elitist. It's like with tattoo magazines, it's almost like if Bill Tinney didn't take the picture, it won't get in the book. You go through the magazine and out of 300 pictures, 225 of them are Bill Tinney pictures.

RJ: Another thing that SKIN & INK is trying to do is—you'll notice that a lot of the magazines will be East Coast, East Coast, East Coast. Well, what SKIN & INK's gonna do is—it's office is on the West Coast—try to give a better view of, not only the United States, but also the rest of the world. Be a little bit more fair.

TD: There's plenty of guys out there that just don't, for whatever reason, blow their own horns. I got a kid in East L.A. named Dean, been tattooing for over 20 years. These kids are the same age as my kids. But he's the kind of guy who doesn't photograph what he does, y'know. You talk about your black-and-white stuff, the joint style, he puts on some really good stuff, and he's got a handwriting style that's just outrageously nice.

RJ: But he's not self-promoting. Yeah, I'm kinda the same way. We enjoy going to the conventions. We have booths at the conventions, and I just think the whole scene is a little bit strange. The convention scene too starts to get a little bit elitist. And you've got all these people who think they're stars, and I hate to tell them they're just stars in a very small world.

TD: This is true. The only one that seems to really be loose and together is the Inkslingers' Ball.

RJ: Well that seems to be more of a party.



The street where Dave works.

TD: Yeah, it's more of a party atmosphere and that's what helps a lot. You don't see so many guys sitting there staring at the hall and waiting for a customer.

RJ: I like the National Conventions, because you see a lot of the old-timers. A lot of people go. You may not agree with National's rules, but—

TD: I got some real problems with the Nationals.

RJ: That's the thing about a lot of European one's too. You'd like 'em if we could ever drag you over there. They're a party. They're fun.

TD: It should be more of a party. It shouldn't be such a strict, walk around in a circle, can't tattoo a head, can't tattoo a hand, and this and that. It's like the Inkslingers'; you go upstairs and get beers, you go downstairs and get your dick tattooed, whatever you want to do.

RJ: Well, that's the way it should be.

TD: Wide open.

RJ: Well, I'm in it to stay. I guess you are too.

TD: I'm in it for the long haul.

RJ: Staying out here till they wheel you out. I see you haven't got too much of your old flash. I remember one time you had almost all the hand-painted flash didn't you?

TD: I still sell a lot of it. I meant to put it in storage, but sure as God somebody comes in and says, "I want one of the old Ernie Sutton panthers on my arm." A guy wanted a certain kind of an anchor, and it's not in none of this stuff here today. So I'm gonna leave it back there because, by God, I keep going back to it all the time.

RJ: That's another pet peeve of mine. I mean, you walk into my shop, and I've got all that preprinted shit on the walls and stuff. But the reason I did it is the same reason you did, because of the market. A lot of young people don't know what real flash looks like. You work your ass off watercoloring a nice set of flash, put it on your wall, and they don't think it looks right. That's just something that drives me nuts.

TD: Well, I think that Bob Shaw started that when he opened up Rose Tattoo down in Long Beach. What he did was get big sheets of poster board, cut up all the flash and colored it in real quick.

RJ: So that's how that started on the West Coast.

TD: Yeah, Bob Shaw started that because he was in a hurry. What he did—this was really amazing to me—is he got it all up, all these big boards with all these macho designs. Then he just took and stapled them to the wall, got a big sheet of clear plastic and stapled that. Then he got that little trim and put it around, and it looked like sheets of flash up there, individual sheets. But it wasn't. It was just big, huge fuckin' rolls of paper with designs glued on.

RJ: I haven't been up there but I heard that Eddie Deutsche's new shop up in San Francisco—that they've got all hand-painted flash again.

TD: Maurice's place is all full of hand-painted stuff.

RJ: What's his shop in San Diego?

TD: Master Tattoo.

RJ: That's another guy who's real traditional, real talented.

TD: He's still got flash in there that was hanging back in the '40s.

RJ: Man, that's cool.

TD: Yeah, it's all in glass frames, screwed to the wall. And they're still doing that stuff. Now they're starting to ask for the old stuff again.

RJ: That's the same with pigments. I know that a lot of people just buy that pre-mixed stuff, that floor wax.

TD: It's scary.

RJ: Yeah, some of that new stuff, you don't know what the hell it is.

TD: I got a sample in the mail. They sent Blue Balls and Sugar Pussy!

RJ: Nice names.

TD: That's the names of the colors.

RJ: Who the hell knows what's in them?

TD: I'll try it on a friend before I'll try it on a customer. I'll get somebody in here that I know real well.

RJ: So you think tattooing's going to be here for a while, and you're gonna be here?

TD: I believe tattooing's gonna stay. It's too much of a legitimate art now. You've got *showings*, not just conventions. Art shows where they're featuring flash and photographs of tattoos!

RJ: I'm glad we could do this interview. So, thanks a lot, and we'll send in some of these pictures and see what the hell they do with them. ■



WOWIE.

HAY

By Maurice Pacheco as told to Holly Tuesday
Photos by Maurice Pacheco

An incredible day... flying into Maui, relaxing and chowing on honey roasted macadamia nuts. Totally cool. Until the doors open on the airport, where it's a steaming hot 100° with humidity above 95%. This is the really bad Florida-style humidity that makes it okay to wear butt floss bathing suits. But otherwise, it is the most laid back airport I've ever been in.

Kihei is the first destination, where I crashed at a friend's house and four-wheeled it in their borrowed Jeep. Kihei is a really strange town. All the Grateful Dead guys moved here when Jerry Garcia died. Jerry Garcia is God. We are talking full hippy-commune style. I had to get out of Kihei. Besides, there was only one tattoo shop in Kihei, which was closed. (If the waves are high, screw working.) So I hung out, getting familiar with Hawaiian food and beer, only to find out that the Hawaiian beer is bad, bad, bad. Even the locals say, "Keep away from the beer, bro."

Worked my way over to Lahaina while trying to get familiar with Hawaiian time. You are completely at the mercy of the other guy. Put away your watch and your pager, and chill out. My big introduction to this concept came the next day. A "couple hours" waiting for my ride turned into six. No problem. Headed out to visit Skin Deep Tattoo.



W A I I
WE'RE IN MAUI!

HAWAII

SKIN DEEP TATTOO



Skin Deep is one of the oldest shops around and smack dab in the middle of strip mall, tourist land. All the tattoo shops on Maui are in strip malls and always near some sort of fast food. Want to get a tattoo? Look for your closest Jack in the Box or Burger King. We hung out with January Zeh, co-owner, talking about the shop and Hawaiian tattooing.



SKIN & INK: Are you affiliated with the rest of the Skin Deep Tattoo shops across Hawaii?

JANUARY ZEH: No, we own the one in Lahaina and the one in Hilo. The one in Honolulu was originally owned by Taunee, but she sold it to another business partner years ago. We let them use the name because we had the trademark on it,

but it's technically owned by someone else entirely.

S&I: And you're the part owner with Taunee of—

JZ: Maui and the Big Island [Hawaii], yes. Taunee's the one who started all of them 22 years ago.

S&I: And you came in later. Were you born and raised in Hawaii?

JZ: No I was not. I'm originally from Connecticut.

S&I: What do you think are the main differences between the Mainland and Hawaii?

JZ: It's paradise—are you kidding? There's no comparison. There is *no* comparison. The pace is easier, the appreciation for our lifestyle far surpasses that on the Mainland.

S&I: Do you mean the tattoo lifestyle?

JZ: It's a trade-off, because the people who live here, particularly on Maui and the Big Island, don't make the kind of money you can make tattooing on the Mainland. Mostly, that's because it's so much more expensive to live here. And we are somewhat isolated, however, we get so many visitors to the island, and they all come to the tattoo shop. Every-

body who has a shop comes by. Everyone who has got tattoos comes by. We get to see a lot of work.

S&I: What sort of clientele do you cater to?

JZ: A lot of the people here are first-time tattooees who want to remember their visit to the islands, because it is usually life changing for them in one way or another. They want to commemorate their experience

with a tattoo. A vast majority of things we do in the shop are custom. People come in and are celebrating their anniversary or want something for the children, so we design it.

S&I: What about the local tattooing customs, the Hawaiian spirituality?

JZ: Oh yeah. The spiritual culture is very much alive here. It's mainstream conversation. *Aumakua*, for example, is like the family totem or the physical embodiment of the family spirit. There are shark families, and there's *honu*, the turtle and the owl. A lot of the Hawaiian tattoos, their designs, represent the different aspects. It's a part of life here. People don't question it. And we do the mainstream tattoos, but a lot of the local tattoos are very important.

S&I: Do you think that's paralleled at all with, for example, the very prescribed and private Japanese traditions of tattooing?



JZ: I don't believe that people take it to that point, to the point where, in Japan, it's almost a private thing, almost over-the-edge private. It's not so much that way here in Hawaii. It's not just for the family, it also has to do with a form of identity. I have always had the theory that people get tattooed for different reasons; there's a big change in their life, it's something identifying them with a spirit, identifying them with community, ideas like that. I think for a lot of Hawaiians it has to do with an identification of the spirit, aligning themselves with the spirit. And that is not necessarily public or private or personal. It's just very matter-of-fact.

Skin Deep can be reached at (808) 661-8288, or visit their Web site at <www.skindeeptattoo.com>. The artists in residence are Taunee Tender, January Zeh, Spike Fuqua, Jay Hand, Jaxson Fuqua, and, at the Hilo shop, Robert Witton and Aaron Sampaga.





Tattoo by: Skin Deep Tattoo, Lahore



Tattoo by: Skin Deep Tattoo, Lahore



HIGHWAY 30 TATTOO

After visiting Skin Deep, ate some bad fish. Lost track of how long I was down. Woke up seven pounds lighter and delirious.

With the last ravages of food poisoning on their way out of my system, I made it over to Highway 30 Tattoo Shop, also in Lahaina. Highway 30 is the Route 66 of Maui and runs all the way across the island. Highway 30 Tattoo is situated on top of a motorcycle shop and has the constant rumble of tattoo machines and motorcycle engines to set the tone. We talked with Mike Kobo.



S&I: What would you say is the main difference between tattooing in L.A. and tattooing in Maui?

MIKE KOBO: We tattoo tourists here, and, in Hollywood I tattooed pimps and hookers and rock 'n' roll stars. I don't need to carry a gun over here. [Laughs.] We do a lot of tourists, and their attitude is that they need to get something while they're on vacation. They just want to get a tattoo. They don't care too much what it is. Which is hard, because sometimes we need a direction to go in. The majority come in, they want a tattoo and they want it now. It can be a drag when you're an artist and you want to do cool stuff. But here at Highway 30, we do get a lot more custom stuff than some of the other shops. At least while I've been here, I've been doing almost all custom stuff for locals. Ozzie and I are true artists, as opposed to just thinking that it's a cool thing to do and opening a shop. Because of the licensing situation, a

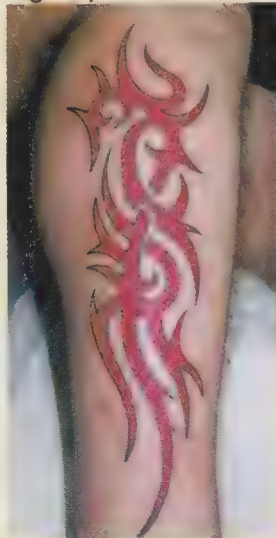
lot of people get a license and think that it makes them an instant tattoo artist, as opposed to paying their dues and being able to draw and tattoo. Some of these other tattooists don't even have tattoos on them and they're tattooing other people. I don't get it. It's kind of sad. I'm dedicated to the art. I'm not in it for the money.

Highway 30 Tattoo Shop can be reached at (808) 667-0951. The

Ozzie Cruickshank

shop is owned by Viking, and the artists are Mike Kobo, Ozzie Cruickshank and Jason O'Blaney.

Tattoo by Ozzie, Highway 30 Tattoo



Tattoo by Ozzie, Highway 30 Tattoo



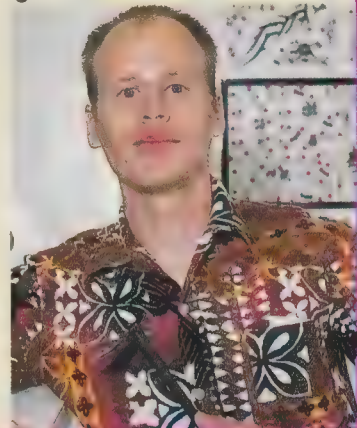
BLACK CAT TATTOO

In Hawaii, the chickens climb trees. We are hanging out deep in the jungle with these old locals, Jan and Dan. Jan began living there in tent, and all these other people followed and built houses. Dan does these church type Hawaiian spiritual services in barracks out there. But there were chickens in the trees and coconuts dropping on your head the whole time. It can be dangerous. This is a tripped out place.

Left Maui to head on to Oahu. Being transported by the island hopper planes is strange. You're in this shaky little flying death capsule, but there's such a fabulous view, you're hypnotized. You can't turn away from the reef. You don't even realize the impact of the blue until you return to California and take a look at Santa Monica seawater.

The mission in Oahu was to cover Black Cat Tattoo. I got a really weird first impression walking up. The outside has pictures of real tattoos, instead of flash, on the windows. But Oahu seems faster-paced in general and a little more advanced tattoo wise. At Black Cat there's a bit more of the Mainland vibe, probably since Igor Mortis just took over this shop after working out of San Francisco.

Igor Mortis



Tattoo by Black Cat



Tattoo by Igor, Black Cat Tattoo



Tattoo by Igor, Black Cat Tattoo

S&I: You just recently came to Hawaii from Tattoo City?

IGOR MORTIS: Yeah, I came out in May. I took this shop over from Candi Everett, but she still works here.

S&I: Have you noticed a difference in Hawaiian tattooing?

IM: Actually, the difference, I think, is that people here are surfing or just hanging out in the sun a lot, so they don't really go for too much color.

S&I: So they're doing a lot of black work. Is it in a Pacific Island or Polynesian type style?

IM: The local guys, they want Hawaiian. We mostly get locals. The shop is not located near the tourists. We also get the military guys, and they want Leo Zulueta-style tribal. Most of the locals bring in their own designs. Most of them get them from their family, their parents. They tell them what designs to get. The military base people get the tribal, or USMC tattoos.

S&I: Do you do traditional American-style tattoos?

IM: A little bit of that, but not a lot. I think that's going to happen more in the future. Everything in Hawaii happens a couple of years later than everywhere else. In San Francisco, everything happens a couple of years *before* everywhere else. I'm also doing the larger, bolder, Japanese-style designs. Hawaii is really a mix of East and West. There's a huge Japanese-American population and Chinese-American, Filipinos—everyone's here. People here love to show off their tattoos.

Black Cat Tattoo can be reached at (808) 263-5535. The artists are Igor Mortis and Candi Everett.

CHINA SEA TATTOO CO.

China Sea Tattoo Company was next. This is home of the good old traditional stuff that we were thirsting for. Some of the best flash I've ever seen is in that shop—solid, solid flash pieces. Walking in, you could immediately tell this was the real shit. This was the old original shop that was owned by Sailor Jerry until 1973. We talked with the current owner, Mike Malone.

S&I: What do you think really characterizes Hawaiian tattooing, or is it any different than the Mainland?

MIKE MALONE: I think that tattooing used to have characteristics from one locale to another, but, since it's become such a gigantic business, I think it's losing all that. I tattoo between here and Minnesota, and the girls here want everything at the base of their spine just like all the girls in Minnesota want the stuff at the base of their spine. I think these trends now have taken over. I think the magazines are making the trends; what they show is what the kids want. Years ago, there was a lot less interest in tattooing. There wasn't anything about it that was real predictable in those days, which was one of the things that made it kind of wonderful. It used to be kind of a beatnik business, you know. It was a business for eccentrics. When I first started, there was a lot of eccentrics in this business, and now I find that a lot of the people tattooing today are sort of trendy kind of people.



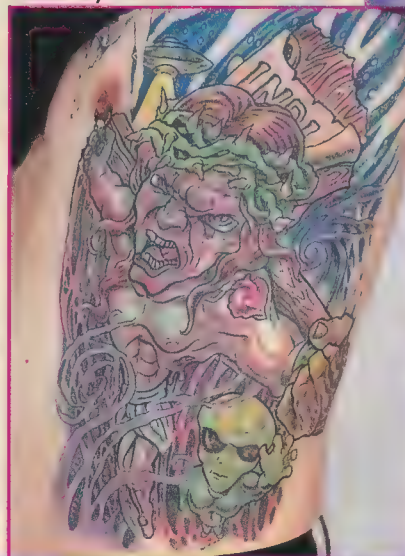
Tattoo by Ozzie, Hwy 30 Tattoo



Igor Mortis flash



Tattoo by Dean Dakine on Ozzie



HAWAII

CHINA SEA TATTOO CO. CONT.

S&I: Do you think that tattooing is losing its originality and uniqueness because of that?

MM: Oh yeah, sure. Very much so. The bigger it gets, the less interesting it will become. Just like the fad of women getting tattooed at the base of their spine right now. That's really big. I call it the *girly spot*. I tattooed last week in Minnesota maybe ten women, and eight of them wanted tattoos there. And it didn't matter whether it fit, it just has to be there. Although, in Hawaii, there is a unique kind of thing going on with Hawaiian or Pacific Island looking tattoos. They're doing a lot of arm-bands and big stripes down their legs and stuff like that—Pacific Isle patterns that you don't get anywhere else. So we're doing some of that. It has a lot to do with me getting it out there. I've been pushing that type of design since about 1975. I've been trying to get people interested in it. Then, all of the sudden, after years of trying to show it to people and being ignored, it started to catch hold. But I don't think that they're seeing it on any real deep level. They're kind of into armbands. We do more arm bands than anything. They're not really taking it past that. I mean, I've done some bigger pieces, more interesting pieces. But there's not as much of an interest in authenticity. Also, they're buying just as much Old English up and down their backs. That's number two. Hawaiian bands and Old English writing. One is just as popular as the other.

S&I: Isn't there some sort of traditional Hawaiian tattooing?

MM: Yeah, there is. But there's very little known about it.

S&I: It seems strange to me that that would be the case with so much resurgence in cultural identity around the world.

MM: I don't think there's much intensity to it. I think there's interest in people looking for a claim, to find something to identify with. To do what it really takes. To live the life. They're talking the talk but they're not walking the walk. I think that's one of the things that's really wrong with tattooing. And I could go on with that. And I don't want to sound like some old broken-down tattooist that's moaning and



Tattoo by China Sea Tattoo



Tattoo by China Sea Tattoo

groaning. Because, hey, these kids can run all over me as far as technique goes. And it's okay—that they've got the energy and the moxie to do that—and it's great, and I'm real happy with the kids I'm bringing along. They're doing great work. But I see something dying in tattooing. It's because once there was true eccentrics involved, and now it just looks that way. It's like fake eccentricity. It used to be there was about 300

guys tattooing in the country, and almost all of them were strange cases. They were strange cases who had found a home in this odd business. It was a haven for wackos. I kind of miss that.

China Sea Tattoo company can be reached at (808) 533-1603. The artists are Mike Malone, Doug Hardy, Jesse Davis and apprentice David Cho.

DRAGON TATTOO

We moved on to another of the most traditional, old-time shops I've ever been in: Dragon Tattoo. You can't make shops any smaller than this. But the artwork is solid, solid, solid, completely traditional and will blow you away. It's way too good not to be known. We talked with the owner, and sole artist, Lance McLain.

S&I: Your shop is a 100% old style, old-school type of shop.

LM: Well, I'm an old-school kind of guy. I've been tattooing for 21 years. I learned here in Hawaii. I'm not from Hawaii but I learned here from Mike Malone. I learned from Mike, because Mike's an old-timer. And when I say old-timer, I don't mean guys in wheelchairs talking about the good old days and reminiscing about how it was before the electric lightbulb. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about a sensibility and a way you approach a certain subject like tattooing. Guys like us started getting involved in the business back 21 years ago and, for Mike, probably 30-something years ago. It's the approach of doing the tattooing in a way that's going to put it on skin, so it's clear and legible, and when people see it, they know it's a tattoo, and it has an impact on people, which in my book is the way I was taught. And the way Mike was taught—strong bold outlines with strong areas of black and bold areas of strong color. Mike sat me down and taught me the fundamentals. He had a good grasp of the fundamentals because he knew Jerry, and he also worked for Zeke Owen in San Diego. Zeke had a tremendous influence on Mike as far as the fundamentals of good, solid, American-style tattooing, with solid color. I would call it almost a classical education in tattooing.

S&I: I see a return to those designs in a lot of shops.

LM: I think that kind of tattooing is more real to peo-



Doug Hardy

HAWAII

ple. It's the kind of tattooing that hits on an emotional level. It's kind of hard to explain in words. I'm not talking about intellectualizing it or anything like that. I'm just talking about a gut level, an emotional level when someone sees a bluebird, let's say, or a banner with a little rose with maybe a child's name in it; it hits home personally. I think people are looking more for that than anything. I think tattooing's based on that. I think the first function of tattooing is that emotional level, this is the primary function of tattooing. I'm up here, I'm just right outside of Scofield Barracks, and I get people that aren't real cerebral, without saying that in a bad way. I get people from rural parts of the United States, and they're young. They're from middle America and they joined the Navy. These aren't people that are into the whole fashion scene. These are regular guys, regular folks that just sign their name on the dotted line in the Army recruiting office and, all of the sudden, they're in the service. And these people want things that mean something to them on a personal level.

I'm getting people that come in and want an eagle. They want a cross with their mom's name in it, because she passed away last year. They want a bluebird with their little daughter's name in it because they just got word last week that their wife gave birth to a little baby girl.

That's the kind of tattooing that these people want more over here, because it's not as trend-driven as in L.A. or San Francisco.

S&I: It's almost as if the military has kept the traditional American tattooing alive over the years.

LM: The military has kept tattooing honest. And it's

not like you're dumbing down tattoos. People look at an image and, without intellectualizing over it, it has a certain emotional impact. They don't think, *Is this something that's going to make me look cool when I'm down at Barnes & Noble sipping on my cappuccino?* Instead, it's, *What does it mean personally to me?* I get some guys who joined the service in order to get a tattoo. They walk in after traveling 500 miles—

they're on a mission. They're on a pilgrimage to get a tattoo.



Tattoo by Lance McLain

S&I: And they come to see you. You're the only artist here right? Actually, there's really only room for just you.

LM: Oh yeah, it's pretty compact. I don't have other artists or even counter people. It's just me. When you come in, you're dealing with the cranky guy that sits in here. You get a main line right to the guy. And when you call, I pick up the phone. So you've got a cranky tattoo artist on the phone, but at least



Flash by Lance McLain

you've got the right guy. So when people walk in, they soon realize they're in the lion's cage with the lion. There's no turning back. Tattooing is right here, going on, right now.

Dragon Tattoo and Lance McLain can be reached at (808) 622-5924.

A FEW PRECIOUS MOMENTS WITH THE KING

I finished with hitting the shops and took a day to wind down. Checked out North Shore. Had to see Elvis's house. Had to see the Pipeline and Sunset Beach. The biggest tiki in the world. Waimea Beach. Waimea Bay. I ended up coming back through sugarcane fields. Stay away from sugarcane. The locals say, if they take you up there, you're in trouble. They'll never find you in the sugarcane.

Spent the last night checking out the lights in the water. Basically, UFOs. Real common in Hawaii. The lights come in from nowhere and dive underneath rocks in the water. No big deal, bro.

Hit the airport. Homeward bound. ■

*Aloha and thank you.
—Maurice Pacheco*



Lance McLain



Dragon Tattoo shop

FACIAL
TATTOOING

The Ultimate Taboo?

It's just as well that Carl weighs 300 pounds and looks like he could rip your head off just by smiling, otherwise people might be tempted to make rude remarks about the shocking, densely tattooed mask that covers 90% of his face. Actually Carl is something of a gentle giant, but you know how deceptive appearances can be.

The sky is gray and broody as we walk down a quiet street in the conservative English town of Nuneaton. It starts to rain, so Carl, his girlfriend and myself dart into a nearby pub for a drink. It's a drink I won't forget in a hurry. As we swing open the door, excited conversation and the sweet smell of beer hits us full in the face. By the time Carl gets halfway through the crowd, all heads have turned, gawking in astonishment. The loud volume of chattering voices is suddenly cut by half, and once we reach the bar, the silence has become so thick you could cut it with a knife. "I'll have a pint of lager please," Carl whispers, quiet and cool (as if this sort of thing happens to him every day).

Once the conversation nervously resumes and everyone pretends to look the other way, I realize that, for Carl, this sort of thing probably *does* happen every day.

CROSSING THE LINE

People like Carl are part of a small minority in the West who have chosen to enter that Twilight Zone and cross the line of complete social unacceptability into the taboo world of facial tattooing. In many tribal societies, now and in the past, facial tattooing was both decorative and functional. The most dramatic example being practiced by the New Zealand Maori who tattooed and chiseled deep grooves into the faces of young men as an excruciating, often deadly, initiation to become warriors. The sight of such extraordinary self-imposed suffering would inevitably scare the living daylights out of any potential enemy. Ironically, this form of protection proved to be less than useful when it came to white settlers, who were so fascinated by this decorative practice that they began to slaughter the Maori warriors almost to the point of extinction; cutting off their heads (while dead or alive) and selling them to the highest bidder.

It is exactly this contradictory fascination and revulsion with facial tattooing that epitomizes the Western attitude to this form of body decoration. Today, when looking at native cultures, we openly accept it as a vital and important part of tribal society, to be studied, collected and put into a muse-

BY
TIM COLEMAN

PHOTOS BY
THE AUTHOR



um. Yet, if anyone dares tattoo their face in the West, then they are immediately ostracized, branded as a freak, and their future employment prospects don't look great. The traveling circuses are traditionally one of the few remaining areas where the facially tattooed can still earn a living. Working as a tattooist is another.

THE FREAK SHOW AESTHETIC

Deliberately becoming a freak was the dedicated ambition of one of the strangest characters in the history of tattooing. Incredibly, the Great Omi, as he decided to call himself, came from an educated middle-class background and, for much of his early life, served as an officer in the British army. His career move from a "respected" English gentleman to one of the most heavily tattooed men of his age, can only be viewed as bizarre beyond all belief. Incredibly, this seemingly normal, totally un-tattooed man managed to pursue Britain's best and most respected tattooist, George Burchett—who had tattooed King George—to cover his entire body and face with astonishing black tribal-like designs. Complete with ivory piercings, he was the first real modern primitive and subsequently succeeded in making a decent living by freaking out everyone who paid to see him.

Although flamboyant characters like the Great Omi and other facially tattooed fairgrounds' performers are remembered with a glow of nostalgia by the tattoo community, it comes as no surprise to discover that it is the professional tattooists themselves, more so than the nontattooed public, who absolutely despise the practice of facial tattooing. "I think facial tattooing is utterly disgusting, and the people who do it are shitbags," states the late, great British tattooist Jock of Kings Cross. "It's completely irresponsible, since it destroys the reputation of tattooing with the public. Just because one idiot walks around with a tattoo on their face—and they're not all idiots. In fact, some are quite intelligent people—they have ruined their lives just to be one of the lads." Of course not all professional tattooists refuse to do facial tattooing. Mickey Sharpz represents many responsible tattooists when he admits, "Yes, I've tattooed faces. I've tattooed eyebrows, beauty spots and put pigment in the lips, but I won't tattoo faces for any other reason."

There is an unwritten rule in tattooing that says many choose to avoid tattoos that involve the interface between the tattooed and nontattooed world. This is, perhaps, best illustrated in ultraconservative Japan where tattoos are traditionally restricted to areas of the body that can be covered by clothing and hair. The classic half-arm tattoo, that can disappear under a short-sleeved shirt, is designed so that the person can blend in with the straight, nontattooed business world without anyone being the wiser. This is in direct contrast to people who want their tattoos to be a public statement. Once the ink starts to spread out on to the hands and neck, nontattooed folk have been known to get distinctly nervous. If it spreads from the neck to covering the face, well, there's no denying it, people get scared. Of course that's their problem.

FACIAL TATTOOING: ART OR ABORTION?

There are two distinct types of tattooists who are willing to go much further in the act of permanent facial decoration. One group, certainly a very



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WERE BORN TATTOOING.
PRACTICAL, SMOGGA
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small one, will be persuaded to do quality tattooing on someone's face in the rare case where they believe that person is utterly committed to having it done, no matter what, and would prefer to do a good job rather than let the person go to an amateur. Take the case of Mark, a builder from Jersey in the U.K. Already heavily tattooed on his body, he found he just couldn't stop. After approaching various tattooists, he eventually found an artist, a very good one, who agreed to tattoo the psychedelic designs on his face. "I did it because I wanted to," he states squarely. "I'm going for complete cover, every bloody square inch. I want to be in the record book. Having it done across the forehead and down the nose was the worst. Christ it hurt." So far the work has cost him a cool \$8,000. The face was very expensive.

Mark explained that he couldn't bring himself to tell his wife that he was going to get his face tattooed. "I lied to her and said that I was going away on work for a few weeks. I went off and got my face fully tattooed, then I returned home. When my wife saw me, she completely flipped out and nearly left me. After a while she finally got used to it; the kids were scared at first, but eventually they got used to it."

THE SCRATCHERS

The second group of facial tattooists are the real bad boys: the scratchers. The facial tattooing they are responsible for is usually of appalling quality, often done without the full or conscious consent of the person being tattooed and, invariably, results in terrible long-term psychological and emotional damage. This devastating type of facial graffiti has unfortunately been practiced more in Britain than anywhere else.

In the late 1970s, Britain was in an economic recession. Consequently, a large chunk of the population was unemployed, young, working-class kids who had nothing else but welfare to live on, and this bred a climate of despair. Out of this emerged both the skinhead and punk movements. Their attitude was largely summed up by the Sex Pistols' motto: "No future." In this strangely stimulating, yet negative atmosphere where kids believed that they would never get jobs and didn't want them anyway, a number of notorious London scratchers were busy tattooing political slogans and other garbage on the faces of kids who couldn't give a damn about the fact that having a Nazi jack boot tattooed on their forehead might possibly lead to serious psychological problems and certainly permanent unemployment. For these kids, it was the ultimate statement of rebellion. They couldn't participate in the system, so screw the system.

Belson, a hard-core punk who has a swastika tattooed on his forehead, describes what happened to him when he visited one of London's most notori-





ous scratchers. "I went in there to have a design tattooed on my neck. I was on glue, so I fell asleep in the chair. When I woke up, I realized he had tattooed a spider web on my face." As if this wasn't bad enough, Belson took his shirt off and, raising his arm, said,

"Look at this. You know, the bastard even tattooed his phone number under mi armpit."

"But why did you get tattooed on the face?" I asked him point-blank as he sat with his wife and kid.

"Well, I ran out of room on my arms, didn't I?"

I persevered. "All right, but there aren't that many people who would go that far, so why on the face?"

He got angry and shouted "Well there's nothing wrong with it!"

I agreed: There's nothing wrong with it, but I insisted, "Why did you do it?"

Finally he gave in. "You know, to piss everybody off of course. Especially my mother."

When I innocently asked him if he had any problems getting a job, he smiled crookedly and said, "Considering I've never had a job, yeah. Every time I go for an interview, they say, 'Oh, this isn't suitable for you.' The employment agency stopped sending me for jobs. It's a waste of time really."

When I asked Carl why he got a facial tattoo, he told me that he had seen the Rolling Stones' *Tattoo You*

album cover and was inspired to get the same sort of design tattooed on his face. Just like that, a crazy, spur-of-the-moment thing. As the conversation progressed, I asked him if he ever regretted it, and that if tomorrow someone invented a perfect method for removing every trace of his facial tattoos, without scars, would he do it?

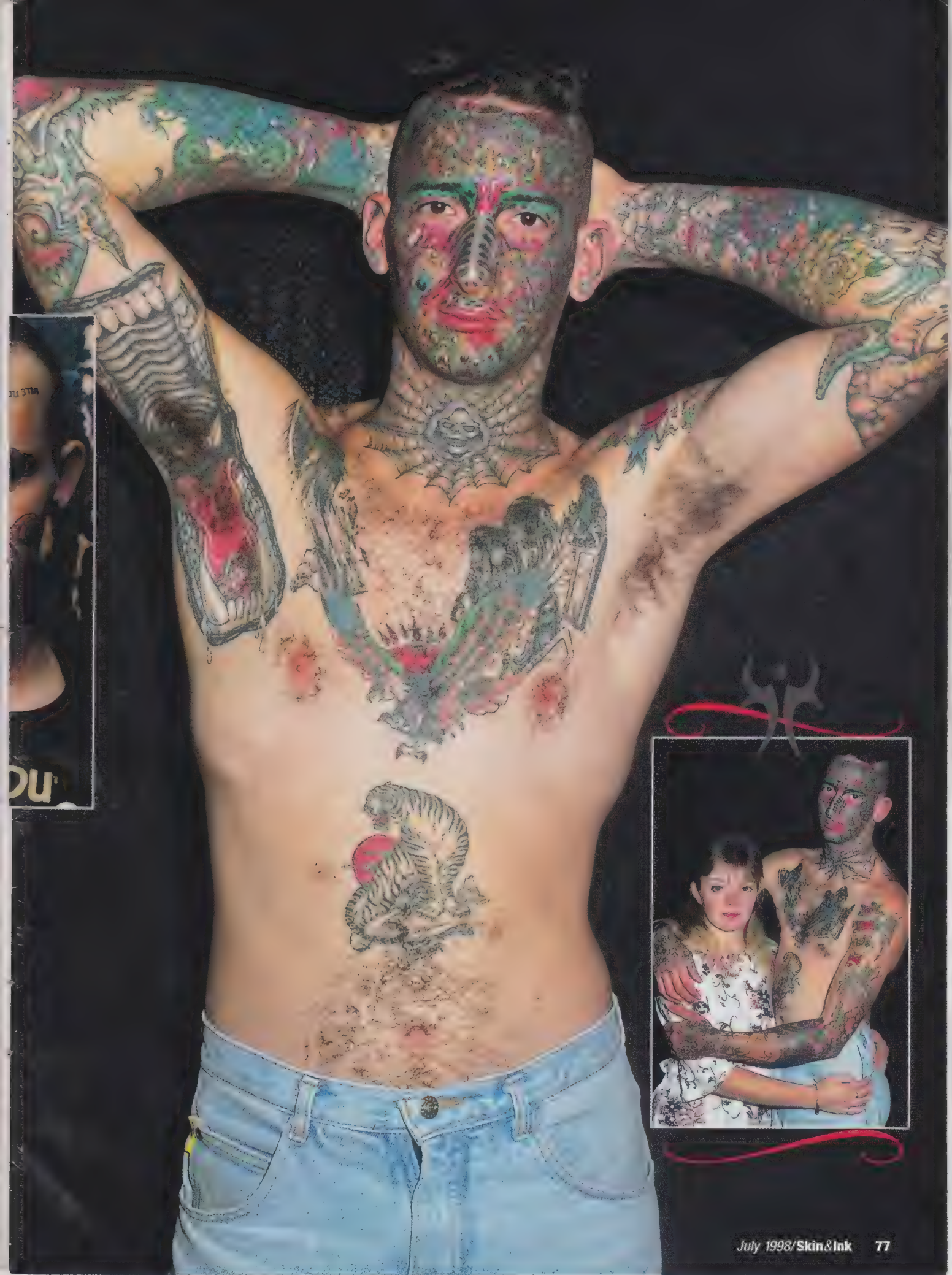
"Absolutely not," he answered. "I like them, and they are there for life."

Fair enough. But as he finished speaking, he eyes became very sad, and he looked down at the floor. In that moment I knew he was lying.



Vicio





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Readers' Gallery



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Tattoo by: Adrian Gallegos, Black Wave



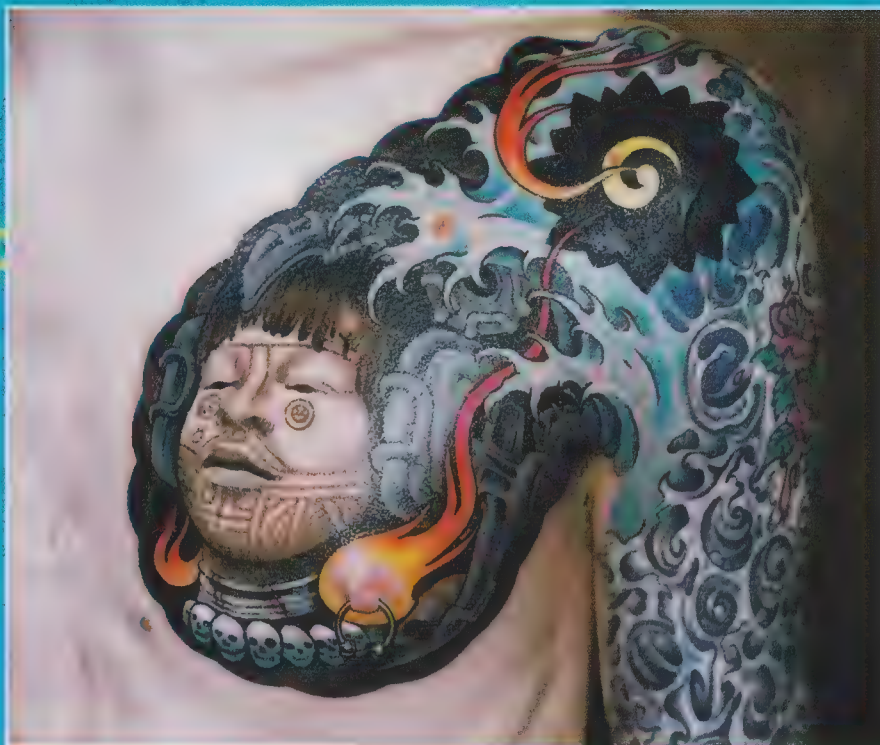
Tattoo by: Shawn Willmorth, the Hive



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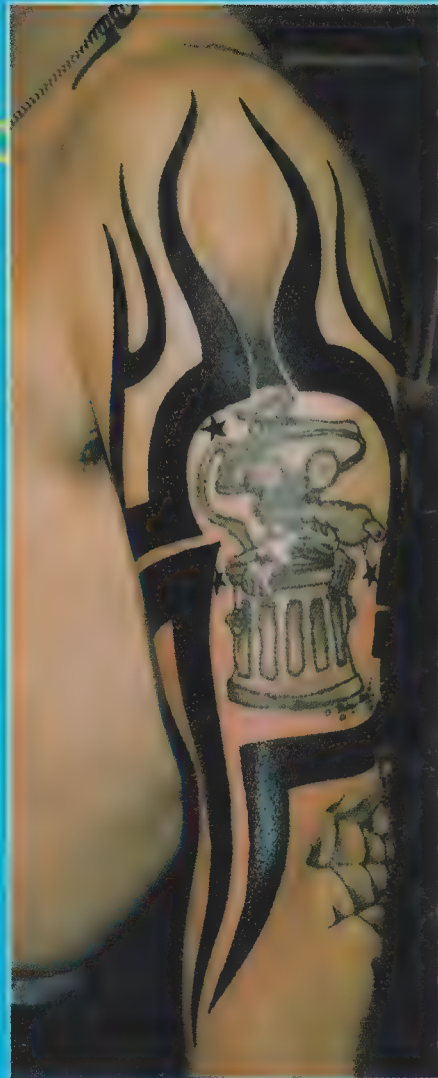
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Tattoos by: Oliver Peck, Richard Stell, Buffy Herman, Adrienne Evans,
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Tattoo by: Tony Urbanek, Inka Dinka Doo

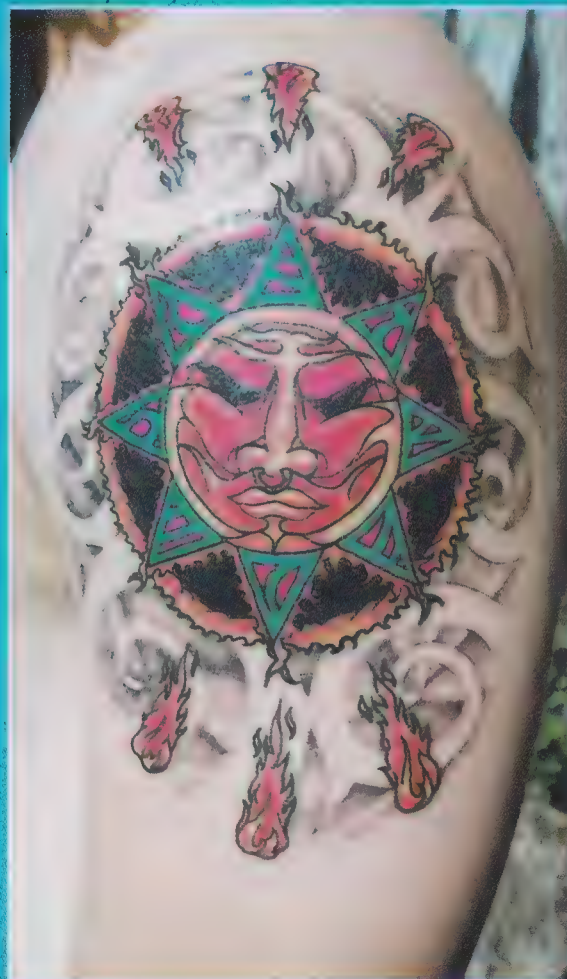


Tattoo by: Pat Stephens, Amigo Tatz



Tattoo by: Chucho, Wolf's Fine Line Tattoos

Tattoo by: Tony Urbanek, Inka Dinka Doo



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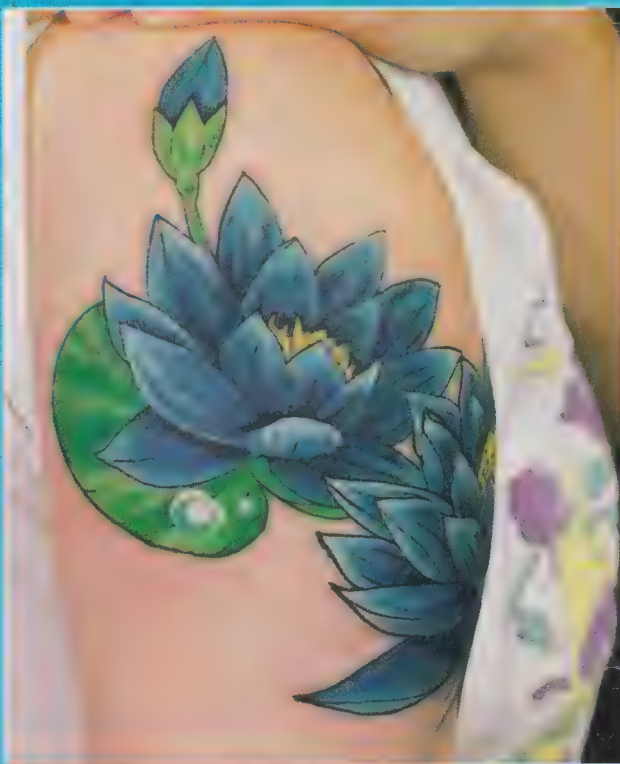
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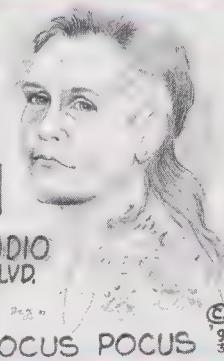
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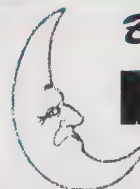
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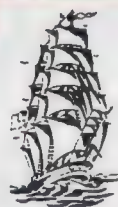
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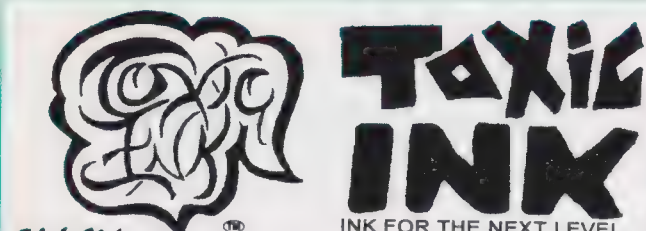
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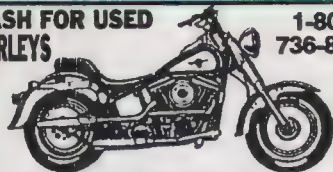
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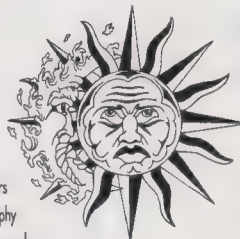
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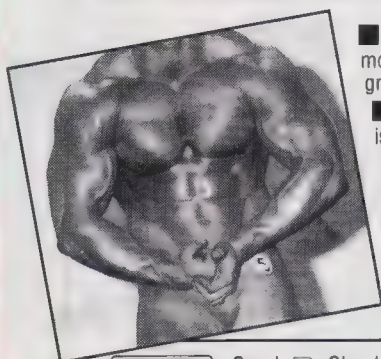
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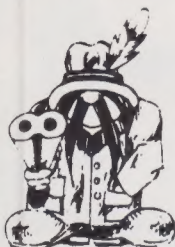
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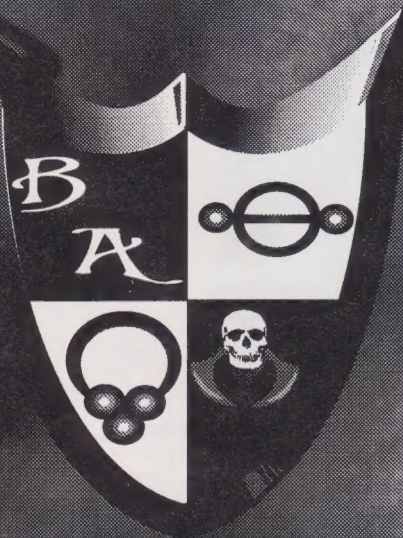
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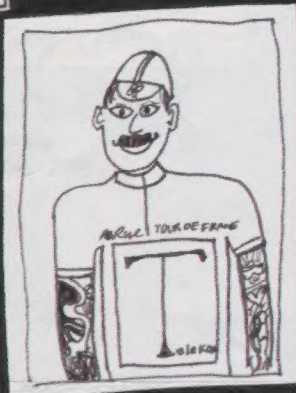
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TATTOO ARTISTS *Their Rides*



C.W. ELDRIDGE
with his wheels

THE CHUCK AD By JEN



One month ago I went to the tattoo convention in S.F. My friend Nicole said, "Hey look, that guy is wearing a bike jersey." Sure enough there was Chuck Eldridge, owner of Berkeley's world renowned TATTOO ARCHIVE. (A good place to get tattoo work.) Chuck was wearing a Risse signature TOUR DE FRANCE yellow jersey. Chuck is passionate about bikes and tattoos. He rides around on a yellow Bridgestone RB-1. Chuck hasn't owned a car for 27 years. Chuck did my first tattoo, the missing link logo. Chuck is a former employee of the missing link and now, he's one of our favorite customers!

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copy of 'THE CHUCK AD' as it appeared in the San Francisco Express and the San Francisco Bay Guardian

So you thought we only featured '50s style hot rods with shaved noses and flush fender skirts. guess again, Louie. Herein is the only mode of transportation SKIN & INK columnist C.W. Eldridge, of Tattoo Archive in Berkeley, uses to get from here to there and back again. Included is a recent advertisement from a local Berkeley newspaper that goes a long way to lionize C.W. and delineate his pedal-powered passion.

Want to share your wheels with the world? Send photos with all the pertinent information to Automotive Editor, c/o SKIN & INK, p.o. box 1069, Pasadena, CA 91102. Do it today!

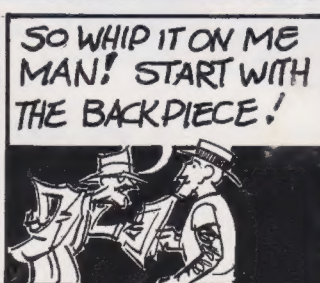
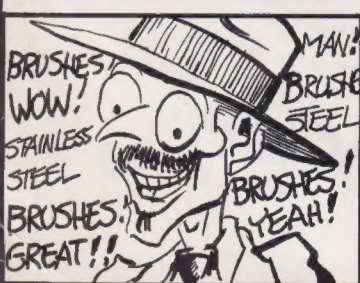
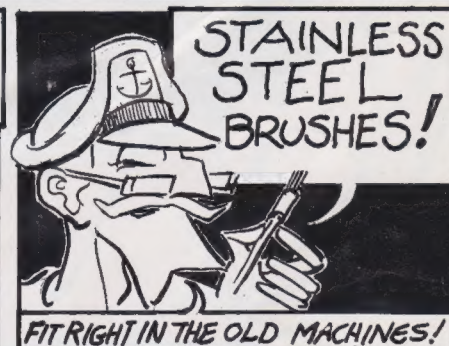
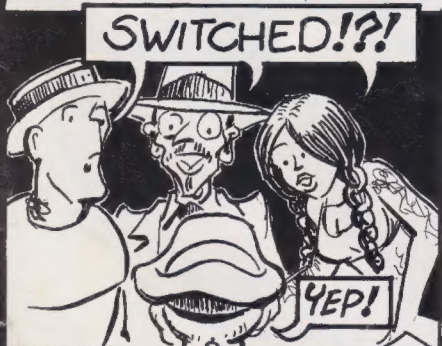
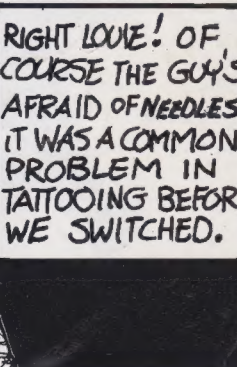
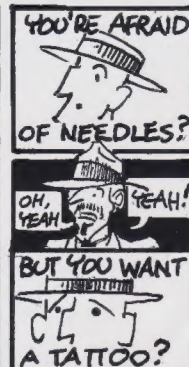
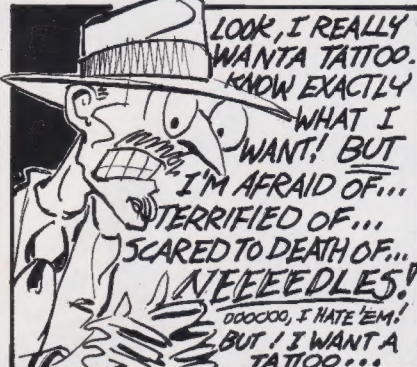
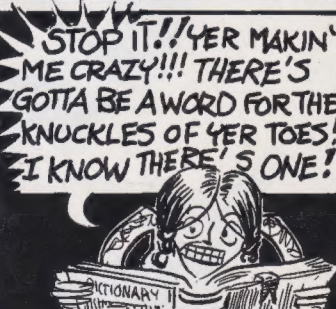
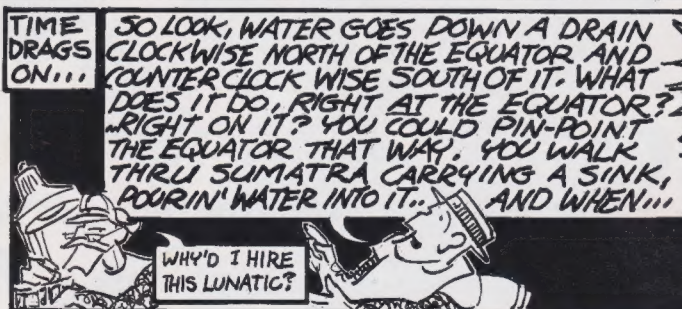
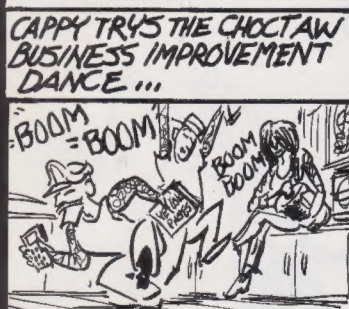
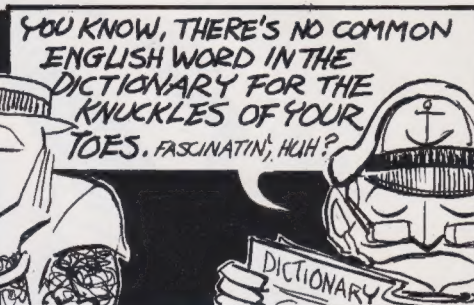
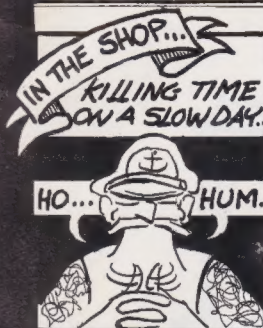
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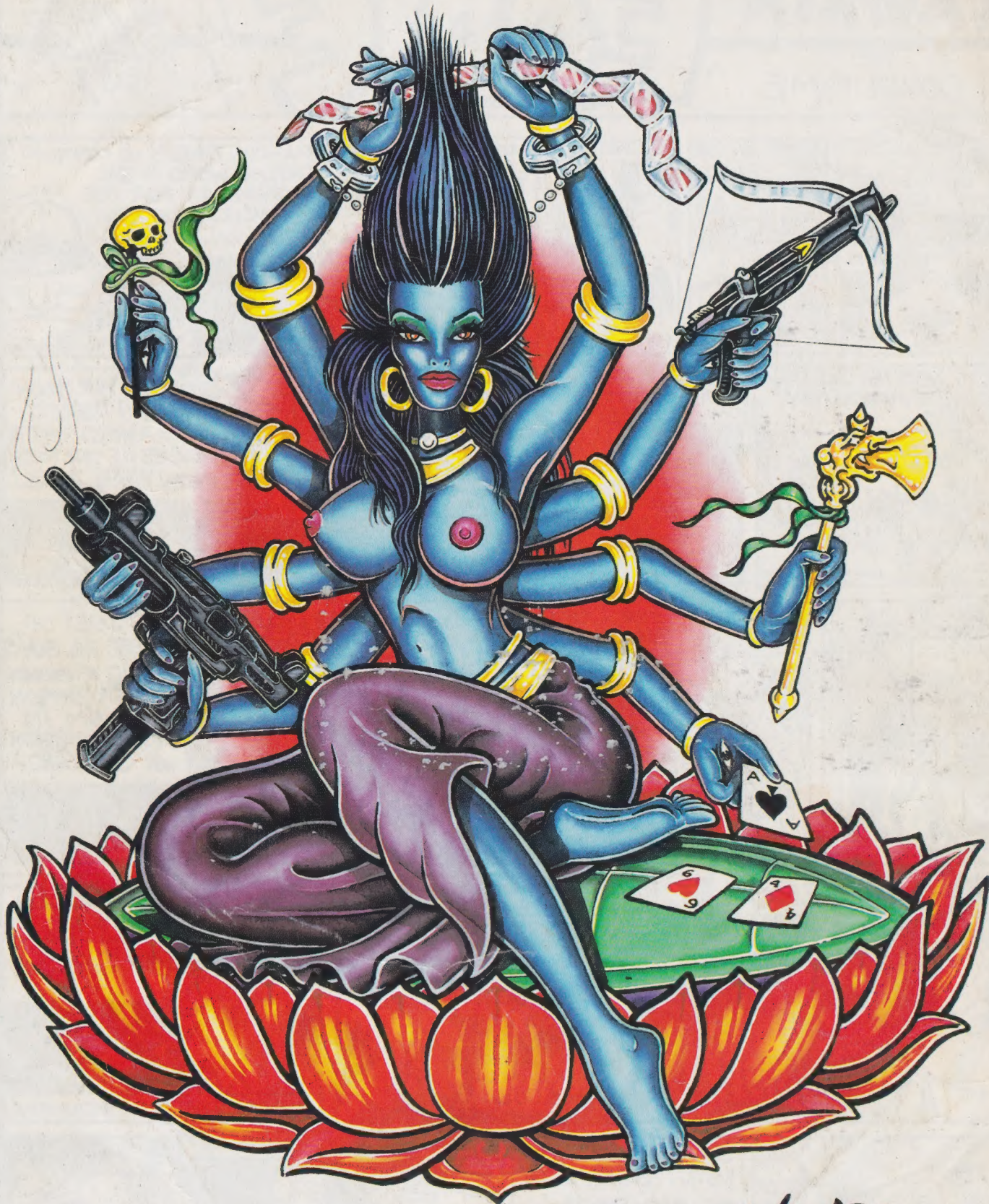
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